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by Robert Bloch

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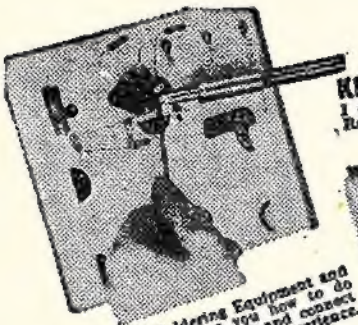

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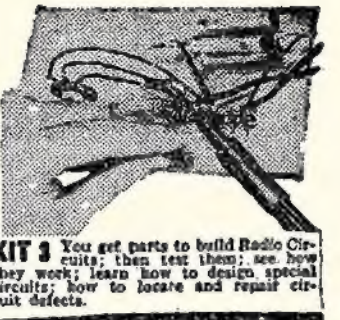

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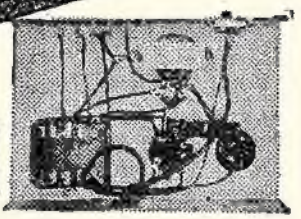

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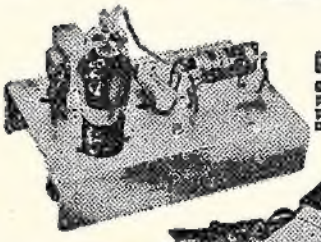

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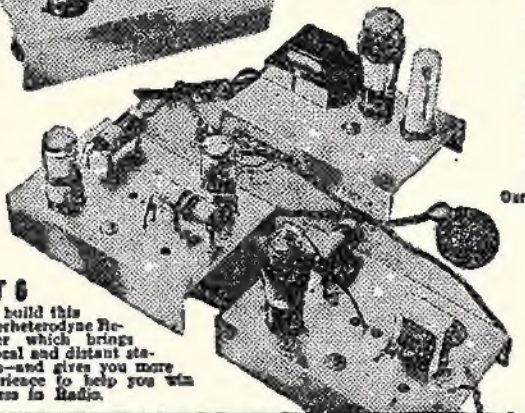

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NOVELETTES

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Next time you try on a new pair of specs, look closely and carefully. Everything looks different, doesn't it? Just HOW different is the big question

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Except for personal experiences, the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

Published bi-monthly by Weird Tales, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 20 cents. *Subscription rates:* One year in the United States and possessions, $1.00. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. English Office: Charles Lavell, Limited, 4 Clements Inn, Strand London, W.C.2, England. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. Copyright, 1947, by Weird Tales. Copyrighted in Great Britain. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office.

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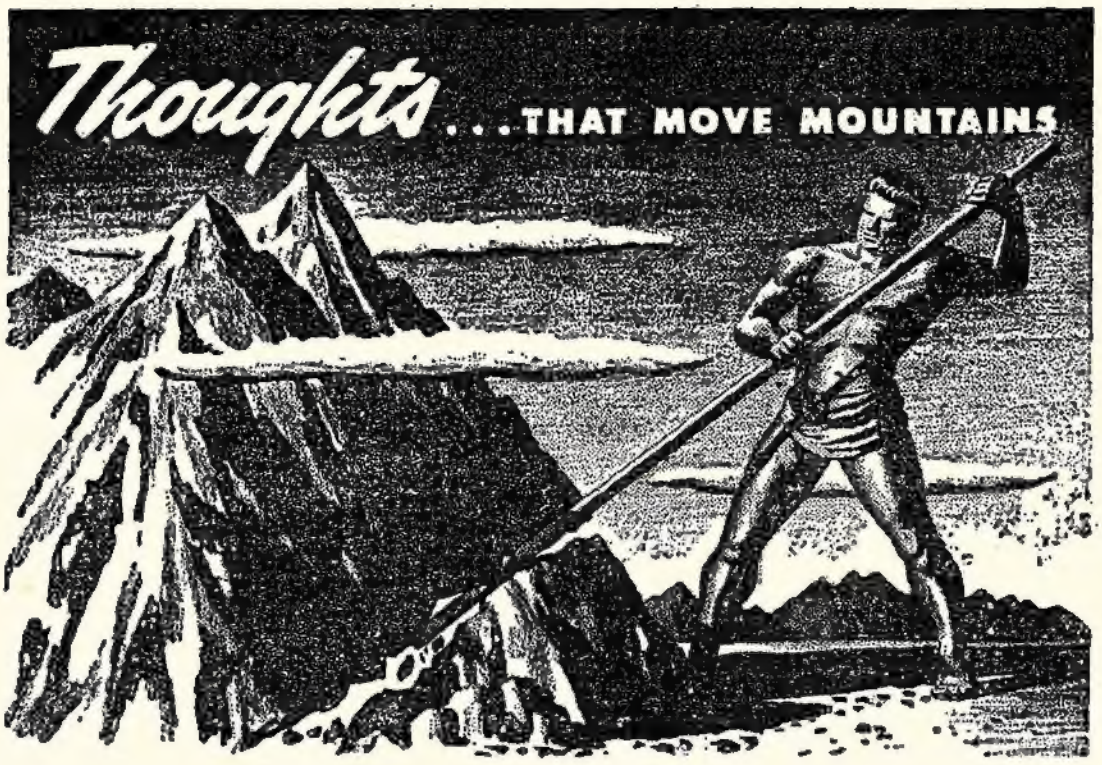
PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. Vol. 40, No. 1

D. McILWRAITH, *Editor.* LAMONT BUCHANAN, *Associate Editor.*



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The Cheaters

1. Joe Henshaw

THE way I got those spectacles, I bought a blind lot off the City for twenty bucks.

Maggie hollered fit to raise the dead when I told her.

"What you wanna load up on some more junk for? The store's full of it now. Get yourself a lot of raggedy old clothes and some busted furniture, that's what you'll get. Why, that dump's over two hunnert years old! Ain't nobody been inside it since Prohibition, it's padlocked tight shut. And you have to throw away twenty bucks for whatever you find for salvage."

And on and on, about what a bum I was, and why had she ever married me, and who wanted to be stuck away for life in the junk and second-hand business. Same old phonograph record she's played for years. Maggie always had a temper.

Well, I just walked out on her and let her

BY ROBERT BLOCH

Spectacles, you know! Makes you see things better!

keep right on jawing to Jake. Jake, he's willing to listen to her. He'll sit back of the shop for hours, drinking coffee in the kitchen when he should be working, and let her rave about me.

But I knew what I was doing. Delehanty at the City Hall gave me the tipoff about this old house and told me to get in my bid, he'd take care of it.

They were pulling down this here old dump near the wharf. Must have been a classy dive once, even though they made a speak out of it back in Prohibition days and then slapped a padlock on it since. Delehanty told me that upstairs, where nobody ever went while it was a rummy hangout, there was all kinds of old furniture—a dozen bedrooms full of clothes, everything from way back.

Maybe Maggie was right about it being junk, and then maybe she was wrong. You never can tell. Way I figured, there might be some real antique pieces up there. One good haul and I stood to make two-three hundred iron men selling to a downtown auction house. That's the way to get ahead

Heading by FRED HUMISTON

in this racket. You got to take a chance once in a while.

So anyhow, I slapped my bid in, and nobody bid against me, so I got the lot. City gave me three days to move the stuff out before they started razing. Delehanty slipped me a key.

I walked out on Maggie, climbed in the truck, and went down there. Usual thing, I have Jake drive and help me load, but this time I wanted to case the joint myself. If there really was something valuable in there—well, Jake's my junior partner, sort of—and he'd want a cut. If he saw the stuff. If I saw it first and moved it out, he'd never know. So let him stay back there and listen to Maggie. Maybe I am a dried-up old jerk like she tells it. And maybe I'm a pretty smart guy. Just because Jake likes to dress up Saturdays and go down to the Bright Spot—

Anyway, I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about these spectacles, these here cheaters I found.

Like I say, I drove down to the wharf on Edison and found the dump. It sure was a crummy-looking pile. Easy two hundred years old. Fancy gables, all rotted; no wrecker would get much out of that heap.

THE lousy padlock was so rusty I almost had to jimmy the door, but the key finally worked and I went inside. Dust fit to choke a pig, all over everything. Downstairs was just rubbish and slats. They must have ripped the bar and fixings out when the Feds raided it. I kind of counted on finding bar stools and maybe some metal laying around, but no soap.

So I tried the stairs. Tried is right. They almost rotted right under my feet, going up. Fancy banister, some kind of mahogany—that was in good shape, but no use to me. Even under all the dirt, I could see that this dump had class, once. About the time George Washington slept there, maybe.

Upstairs was even worse. Eight big rooms, all dust, and broken sticks of furniture. Busted beds. Canopy beds, mostly. Springs all broken. Bedding, just rags. I poked around but didn't find anything unless you count the crockery under the beds.

There were some chairs with nice wood to them, the frame parts, but springs and stuffing were absolutely out. Couple tables around, too, but strictly from lumber.

I WAS beginning to burn up. I'd figured the least there would be was maybe some pictures on the walls; you know, some classy old masters kind of paintings like Rembrandt and so on. But I got rooked, and now I knew it for a fact.

Closets were full of clothes, though. Lucky I hadn't brought Jake because he'd blab to Maggie and then she'd know for sure she'd been right. The clothes were all rotted and raggedy like she said they would be. And stink!

I poked around and got to wondering. You don't run into old clothes much in a deserted house. Or bedding, either. Why had they took a powder in such a hurry, the people? So long ago, too! Why, them clothes was way before the Civil War, the styles of them. Fancy pants for men. Couple rotted shoes with nothing left but buckles.

I picked some up. That was a break. Silver. Silver buckles. I went around the bedroom closets and got maybe a dozen. That was OK with me. I found a sword, too. Real fancy stuff, in one of those scabbards that was maybe silver, too. I'd find out about that—it sure was a genuine antique piece all right.

Funny about those people having left all this junk. Delehanty tipped me off this was supposed to be a haunted house. Of course in my line that's strictly a gag. I salvaged maybe two hundred haunted houses in my time—every old house is supposed to be haunted. But I never seen a ghost in thirty years, nothing ever alive in those places but maybe some cockroaches.

Then I come to this end room with the big door. All the other bedrooms was open; fact, some of the doors was loose on their hinges. But this door wasn't sprung. It was locked. Locked tight.

I had to use a crowbar from the truck on it. Got kind of excited, because you never can tell what a locked door means. Worked and sweated, and finally got it open.

Dust hit me in the face, and a stink. An awful stink. I was carrying a flashlight, of course; wasn't dark out, but the house was gloomy and there wasn't any lights, it being so old and all.

So I coughed and turned on the light and took a look. It was a big room with mounds of dust all over the floor and under that a big rag that was maybe a carpet once upon a time. There was some oak panels in this room too, and the wreckers could maybe get something for that because it was prime lumber still, even under the dust you can tell when a place is really built.

But I wasn't interested in dust and rags and panels. I wanted to know why the room was locked. And the flashlight told me. It showed me the walls.

Bookshelves.

From the floor to the ceiling, bookshelves, all around the whole lousy room.

There must of been a thousand books in that room, no kidding, a regular library some guy had up there.

I waded through the dirt and pulled out a couple of the nearest books. The bindings were some kind of leather—that is, they was leather once. Now the things just sort of crumpled in my hands and so did the pages. All yellow and musty, which is why the stink was so bad in here.

I began to swear. I'm no *schmoe,* I know there's dough in old books. But not unless they're in good condition. And this stuff was rotten.

Then I spotted some stuff in iron bindings. That's right, so help me, iron bindings! Big clasps you had to unbuckle before you opened them. I took one down and got it open. It was some kind of foreign stuff, Greek maybe, I don't know. But I recollect the name on the front page—*De Vermis Mysteriis.* Screwy.

Still you never know, and I decided I would haul all the good ones down to the truck and see what Segall would give me for the lot. Maybe there was something valuable here after all.

Then I took another look around the room. No furniture. No tables or chairs in here at all, like in the bedrooms. Except over in the corner—

OVER in the corner was this here table. A sort of a desk-table, for writing, I guess. And right on top of the table, smack in the center, was a skull.

So help me, it was a human skull, all yellow and grinning up at me under the flashlight beam, and for a minute I almost went for that haunted house stuff.

Then I notice how the top is bored out for one of them old-fashioned goose-quill pens. The guy who collected all these foreigner-type books used the skull for an inkwell. That's a screwball for you, hey?

But the table is what interested me, really interested me, that is. Because it was antique all right. Solid mahogany, and a job of carving—all kinds of fancy scrollwork and little goofy faces carved in the wood.

There was a drawer, too, and it wasn't locked. I got excited, figuring you never can tell what you find in such places—maybe a lot of valuable documents, who knows. So I didn't waste much time pulling the drawer open.

Only it was empty. Nothing in it whatsoever.

I was so mad I let out a couple words and kicked the side of the table.

That's how I found them. The cheaters, that is.

Because I hit one of the little goofy faces and a sort of panel in the side of the table at the left just swung open and there was this drawer.

I reached in and pulled out the spectacles.

Just a pair of glasses, is all, but real funny ones. Little lenses, square shaped, with big heavy ear-pieces—books, I guess is what you call them. And a thick bridge for over the nose; that was silver too.

I didn't get it. Sure, there was silver in the frames, but they couldn't be worth more than a couple bucks. So why hide the cheaters away in a secret drawer?

I held the glasses up and wiped some specks of dust off the lenses, which was yellow glass instead of the regular, clear kind, but not very thick. I noticed little designs in the silver frames, like engraved lines. And right across the bridge for the nose was a word, carved into the silver. I remember that word because I never saw it before.

"Veritas" was the word, in funny square letters. Some more Greek, I guess. Maybe the old guy was Greek. The guy who had the locked library and the skull for an inkpot and the glasses in the secret drawer, I mean.

I had to squint some at the lettering in

the gloom there because my eyes weren't too good and—that gave me an idea.

Get to be my age, you get kind of short-sighted, sometimes. I always figured I'd go down to the opt—to the eye doctor—but I never got around to it. But looking at the cheaters I said to myself, why not?

So I put them on.

The bows, or stems, whatever you call them, were pretty short for me. And like I said, the lenses were small. But I didn't feel uncomfortable wearing them. Only my eyes hurt.

My eyes hurt. Not hurt, exactly, but something else like hurting inside of me. Like I was being all pulled and twisted.

Sounds screwy? Well, it felt screwy, too. Because the whole room went far away for a minute and then it came up close, and I blinked fast.

After that it was all right, and I could see pretty good. Everything was sharp and clear.

I left the cheaters on and went downstairs, because it was getting dark and I figured on coming back with Jake tomorrow and loading up the truck. No sense in me doing it all by myself, Jake being so much younger, he could lift the heavy stuff.

So I went home.

I come in the shop and everything was OK and Jake and Maggie were sitting in the back having coffee.

Maggie kind of grinned at me. Then she said:

"How did you make out, Joe, you lousy, old baboon? I'm glad we're going to kill you."

No, she didn't say *all* that.

She just said, "How did you make out, Joe?"

But she was *thinking* the rest.

I *saw* it.

Don't ask me to explain: I *saw* it. Not words, or anything. And I didn't *hear*. I saw. I knew, by looking at her, what she was thinking, and planning. Like what was coming next, almost.

"Find a lot of stuff?" Jake asked, and I *saw*, "I hope you did because it's all mine as soon as we bump you and we're gonna bump you for sure tonight."

"What you look so funny for, Joe, you sick or something?" Maggie said, and she also said, to herself, "Who cares, he's gonna be a lot sicker soon all right, all right, does he suspect anything, no, of course not, he couldn't, the old goat never got wise to us for a whole year now, just wait until Jake and I own this place together and his insurance too, it's all planned."

"Yeah," I said. "I was lifting stuff over to the house, and I don't feel so hot. Guess I better sit down."

"What you need, you need a little drink to warm you up," Jake said to me, and to himself he was saying, "That's the way, we'll start it like we figured, get him drunk and then when he gets upstairs I'll push him down and if that don't finish him Maggie will with the board, it leaves the same kind of bruise. Everybody knows he drinks, it's just an accident like and I can swear to it."

I made myself smile.

"Where'd you get the cheaters?" Maggie asked, saying, "God, what a homely mug on him, I get sick just looking at that face but it won't be long now."

"Picked them up over at the house," I said.

Jake got out a fifth. He opened it and got some water glasses. "Drink up," he said.

I sat there, trying to figure it out. Why could I read their minds? Why did I know what they were planning? I didn't know. But I could see what they were up to. I could *see* it. Could it be—the cheaters?

Yes, the cheaters. *They* were the cheaters. Carrying on behind my back. Getting ready to finish me off. Tumble down the stairs. Never mind how I knew. I knew, that was the main thing.

I KNEW what they were thinking while they sat there drinking with me, laughing with me only really laughing at me and waiting until I got drunk enough so they could kill me. Pretending to drink a lot while they got me loaded, until I made them drink shot for shot with me.

I couldn't get drunk, not as long as I was *seeing* them. The thoughts going through their heads, your blood would run cold and no liquor could make you drunk if you knew such things.

Everything turned to ice, it was all cold.

and I knew just what to do. I made them drink with me and they began to get loud, only the thoughts kept getting worse. I listened to them talk, but all the time I saw their thoughts.

"We'll kill him, just a little while now, why doesn't he pass out, he's drinking like a fish, mustn't take too much, got to keep him from suspecting, God how I hate that ugly puss of his. I want to see it smashed open, wait until he's out of the way and I have Maggie all to myself whenever I want to, he's going to die, I could sing it, he's going to die, die, die—"

Everything turned to ice.

I knew just what to do.

They were laughing and singing and it was way after dark when I went out to the truck to put it into the garage for the night. They stayed behind, thinking about how to do it now, how to keep people from suspecting them.

Me, I didn't worry about that. Suspecting, I mean. I was all set.

I put the truck away and then I came back to the kitchen, carrying the crowbar from the truck that I'd used up at the house.

I came into the kitchen and locked the door. They saw me with the crowbar, standing there.

"Hey, Joe—" said Jake.

"Joe, what's wrong?" said Maggie.

I DIDN'T say a word. There wasn't any time to talk, because I was smashing Jake's face in with the crowbar, smashing his nose and eyes and jaw, and then I was hammering Maggie over the head and it spurted out and up, and the thoughts came out and they weren't words, just screams and then there weren't even any screams left to see.

So I sat down and took off the cheaters to polish them. I was still blowing on them when the squad car came and the cops took me.

They wouldn't let me keep the glasses and I never did see them again. It didn't matter much, anyhow. I might have worn them at the trial, but who cares what they thought of me then? And at the end I would have had to take the cheaters off. I know they would have made me take them off.

When they put the black hood over my head, just before they hung me.

2. Miriam Spencer Olcott

I DISTINCTLY remember it was on Thursday afternoon, because that's when Olive has her bridge club over, and of course she simply *must* have Miss Tooker help with the serving.

Olive is much too diplomatic to lock me in my room, and I always wondered why it was that I seemed to get so sleepy on Thursdays, just when I might have a chance to slip out without anyone noticing. Finally I realized that she was putting something into my luncheon—more of Dr. Cramer's work, no doubt.

Well, I'm not a complete fool by any means, and this Thursday I simply made up my mind. When the tray came up I just nibbled a bit at some toast—that seemed safe—and poured the rest down the you-know-what. So Olive was none the wiser, and when I lay down upon the bed and closed my eyes she felt satisfied.

I must have rested about an hour until I heard the front door open and the voices drifted up the stairwell. Then I knew it was safe for me to get up.

I put on my dress and powdered my nose, and then I took ten dollars out of the pincushion where I keep what's left of the cash. After that there was nothing to do but tiptoe down the stairs very quietly and slip away.

Olive and her friends were in the parlor with the door closed. I had to rest a moment at the foot of the stairs because of my heart, you know, and for an instant I had the most peculiar temptation to open the parlor door and stick my tongue out at her.

But that wouldn't have been very ladylike. After all, Olive and her husband Percy had come to live with me and take care of me when Herbert died, and they got Miss Tooker to help when I had my first heart attack. I mustn't be rude.

Besides, I knew Olive would never permit me to go out alone any more. So it would be wiser if I didn't disturb her now.

I went out very quickly and walked north, away from the parlor windows. I

turned down Edgewood and decided to take a bus at the corner. It cost a dime, but I couldn't be choosy.

There were several people on the bus and they kept staring at me. People seem so rude nowadays; I can't help but notice. When Herbert was alive we had the electric runabout and I never was forced into contact with the masses, but now I'm old and all alone, and there's no one to protect me.

I know my clothing is not in the latest style, but it is fresh and neat and there is no call for rude and vulgar curiosity. I wear highbutton shoes for the support they afford my ankles, and if I chose to be sensible regarding draughts, that is my affair. I mean, about the gray muslin stockings and the scarf. My coat is fur and very expensive; it needs relining and possibly some mending, that is true, but for all strangers know I might be quite impoverished. They need not be so rude. Even my bag comes in for its share of attention on the part of boors. My fine reticule, which Herbert brought back for me from abroad, in '22!

I didn't like the way they stared at my bag. It was almost as if they knew. But how could they know? No one had ever suspected.

I sniffed and sat back. I had to plan, now. I must get off east of the river. Then I could walk either north or south. I wasn't quite sure yet what I planned to do. I had ten dollars, remember.

If I walked north, I needed my bag.

If I walked south, like the last time—

No. I couldn't do that. The last time was frightful. I remember being in that awful place, and the men laughing, and I had been singing, I believe, was still singing when Percy and Olive came for me in the taxicab.

How they found me, I'll never know. Perhaps the tavernkeeper telephoned them. They got me home, and I had one of my attacks and Dr. Cramer told them never to even mention it to me again. So there were no discussions. I hate discussions.

But no. I couldn't walk south again today.

I left the bus east of the river and walked north. I began to get that tingly feeling all over. It frightened me but it felt—nice.

It felt even nicer when I went into Warram's and began to look at the cameos. The clerk was a man. I told him what I wanted and he went to look for it. He brought back a wide selection and I tried to make up my mind. I told him about my trip to Baden-Baden in '16, and what Herbert and I had seen in the jewelry stores during the war abroad. He was very patient and understanding. I thanked him politely for his trouble and walked out, tingling. There was a brooch, a really lovely thing, in my reticule.

At Slade and Benner's I got a scarf. The girl was an impertinent young snip, and so I felt I really must buy a corsage to distract her attention. They were vulgar things, and cost 39 cents. Not nearly worth it. But the scarf in my bag was of imported silk.

IT WAS very exciting. I walked in and out of the shops, and the bag began to fill. I bought. One must be very discreet, you know. None of my purchases were extravagant, but I managed to spend over four dollars. Still, I had the little figurine, and the locket, and that perfectly enormous jar of shaving cream. That seemed silly, but the opportunity was there, and perhaps Percy might find a use for it.

Then I started going into these secondhand shops and antique stores near the City Hall. One never knows. My reticule was almost full, but I could still make purchases.

I saw a lovely escritoire in the window of a place called Henshaw's. Obviously solid mahogany and beautifully carved. There was a slight chance that it might be available for a trifling sum.

The proprietor was a fat man. I smiled at him.

"I noticed that escritoire in your window, Mr. Henshaw," I began.

He shook his head.

"It's sold, madam. Besides, I'm not Henshaw. He's dead. Didn't you read about the case in the papers? Hanged him."

I held up my hand and sniffed.

"Please," I said. "Spare me."

"My name's Burgin. Bought the place out. We got a lot of nice things here, though, besides that writing table."

"I'll glance around a bit, if I may."

"Sure, madam."

I had seen the table with the ceramics, and now I approached it. But he never let his eyes stray from me. I was tingling and felt nervous. There was one piece I simply adored. I had the bag open and it only needed an instant—

He was right behind me. He had seen my hand move.

"How much is this?" I said, very quickly, picking up an object at random from one of the trays.

"Two bits!" he snapped.

I fumbled in my pocket and gave him a quarter. Then I marched out of the store, very quickly, and slammed the door.

It was only when I reached the street that I stopped and examined the object in my hand.

A pair of spectacles. How in the world had I ever managed to snatch eyeglasses from that tray?

Still, they were rather unusual—quite heavy, and obviously silver.

I held them up to the light and in the sunset I noticed a word etched across the bridge.

"*Veritas.*" Latin. Truth. Strange.

I slipped them into my pocket and walked briskly down the street. I was tired, yes, but I felt the need of leaving this disreputable neighborhood before sunset. Besides, Olive would be bidding goodbye to her guests shortly, and I must return before my absence was discovered.

GLANCING at the City Hall clock I was astounded to find out that it was past five. This would never do. I should be found out, and there might be a distressing scene—

A taxicab ride to the house costs fifty cents. But this was an emergency. I beckoned to a cab-driver and entered his vehicle.

As we drove, I grew more and more apprehensive. Even the thought of my successful expedition, of what I had in my bag, didn't console me.

Suddenly I remembered something else. Olive and Percy were dining out tonight! And Dr. Cramer was to come over and examine me!

Surely they would have ascertained my absence. How *could* I explain it?

I fumbled in my pocket for the fare. My hands encountered a cold object.

The spectacles.

That was the solution. I placed them firmly on the bridge of my nose and adjusted the bows, just as we turned in at the driveway.

When the cab stopped the tingling feeling seemed to rush back, and for a moment I felt that I might have another attack. But I mastered it. Perhaps the glasses were "drawing" on my eyes a bit. In a moment I could see clearly and the tingling drained away.

I paid the driver and walked quickly towards the house, before he had time to comment on the lack of a "tip." Then I took out my key and opened the door.

The glasses seemed to make it easier. Perhaps I really *did* need spectacles. Dr. Cramer had once commented upon the fact that I was slightly astigmatic. At any rate, everything seemed clear, quite clear.

Everything *was* clear.

Let me express myself properly, now, so that you will be sure to understand.

I OPENED the door. Olive and Percy were standing there; Olive so tall and thin and Percy so short and fat. Both of them had pale skins. Like leeches.

Why not? They were leeches. I looked at them, and it seemed to me as though I were meeting them for the first time. They smiled, but they were strangers.

Not *quite* strangers. Because I knew them. I could *see* them. The leeches.

Moving into my house when Herbert died. Using my property. Living on my income. Getting Miss Tooker to come and keep her eye on me. Encouraging Dr. Cramer to make an invalid out of me. Ever since Herbert died. Now they were waiting for *me* to die.

"Here's the old——now."

I won't *repeat* the word.

For a moment I was shocked beyond all belief. To think that mild little Percy would stand there smiling and *say* such a thing to my face!

Then I realized that he wasn't saying it. He was *thinking* it. I was reading his mind.

He said, "Mother, darling, where on

earth did you disappear to? We worried so."

"Yes," said Olive. "We didn't know what to think. Why you might have been run over." Her tone was the familiar one of daughterly affection. And behind it, the thought, "Why wasn't she run over, the old——"

That word again!

So that is what she thought of me. That's what they both thought of me!

I began to tremble.

"Sit down, dear. Tell us all about it." Percy, smirking. Puffy-mouthed leech. Sucking my blood.

I summoned all my strength.

"Yes, Mother. Where *were* you?" Olive, smiling. Prim-mouthed leech. Thinking, "Did you go out on another bat, you doddering old fool? Or were you making trouble for us, stealing from the shops again? The times Percy has had to go down and make good on merchandise—"

I caught that thought and blinked behind the spectacles. I hadn't suspected *that*. Did they *know*, in the stores, what I did? And permitted it as long as Percy—?

But then I wasn't profiting at all! They were all against me, I saw it for the first time. Spectacles.

"If you must know," I said, very rapidly, "I went downtown to be fitted for a pair of glasses."

Before they had time to consider that fully, I marched up the stairs, entered my room, and slammed the door. Not angrily, but quite firmly.

I was really quite upset. Not only by their thoughts, but because of the fact that I could read their thoughts. They were waiting for me to die. I knew it—but how?

Perhaps it was all my imagination. Maybe I was really ill. They always said so. Miss Tooker treated me as an invalid. Dr. Cramer came regularly twice a week.

He would be coming tonight. He was very nice. Let him tell me what was wrong.

Because it couldn't be the spectacles. It couldn't be. Such things aren't really possible.

It was only that I was so very tired and so very old—

I took off the glasses and lay down on the bed and suddenly I was crying. I must have fallen asleep, for when I awoke it was quite dark.

The door had slammed downstairs. Now footsteps ascended the stairs. Miss Tooker.

She opened the door with one hand. She carried a tray. A teapot and some biscuits. Part of Dr. Cramer's diet. He knew how I loved to eat and he wouldn't permit it.

I made a face at Miss Tooker.

"Go away," I said.

She smiled weakly. "Mr. and Mrs. Dean have left for their dinner engagement," she said. "But they thought you might be wanting your supper now."

"Go away," I repeated.

"Are you sure you're feeling quite yourself?" she asked, setting down the tray on the table beside the bed. "Dr. Cramer should be coming soon, and—"

"Send him up and go to bed," I snapped. "But keep out of here."

HER smile faded and she started for the door. For a moment I had the queerest desire to put on the spectacles and look at her through them. But that was all an illusion, wasn't it? I watched her depart, then sat up and reached for my bag.

I began to go through my treasures. It took quite some time. I became so engrossed that I was unaware of Dr. Cramer's arrival.

His knock startled me. I hastily stuffed my collection back into the bag and dropped it at the side of the bed. Then I lay back and called, "Come in."

Dr. Cramer was always the soul of courtesy. He entered quietly, despite his portliness, and sat down in the boudoir chair near my dressing table.

"What's all this I hear about you, young lady?" he chuckled. He always called me "young lady." It was our private joke.

"What do you mean?" I smiled at him pleasantly.

"I hear you took a little trip this afternoon. Mrs. Dean mentioned something about spectacles—"

I shrugged. He leaned closer.

"And you haven't been eating. You were crying."

He sounded so sympathetic. A wonderful personality, Dr. Cramer. One couldn't help but respond.

"I just wasn't hungry. You see, Olive

and Percy just don't understand. I do so enjoy getting out into the air, and I hate to trouble them. I can explain about the glasses."

He smiled, and winked.

"First, some tea."

"I'm afraid you'll find it cooled by now."

"That's easily remedied."

He turned and set the teapot on the little electric hotplate over in the corner. He worked quickly, efficiently, humming under his breath. It was a pleasure to watch him, a pleasure to have him visit. We would sit down now and have a cup of tea together, and I would tell him everything. He knew. He would understand. Everything would be all right.

I sat up. The glasses clicked on the bed beside me. I slipped them on.

Dr. Cramer turned and winked at me.

When he winked I closed my own eyes and felt the glasses pulling on them.

Then I opened my eyes and I knew. I knew that Dr. Cramer was here to kill me.

HE SMILED at me and poured out two cups of tea. He got the second cup from the table where my luncheon tray still rested. I watched him pour. I watched him stoop over the cup to the left and slip the powder into the hot tea.

He brought the tray over to the bed, and I said, "Doctor—a napkin, please." He got the napkin, sat down next to me, and politely lifted his cup as I raised mine.

We drank.

My hand didn't tremble, even though he watched me. I emptied my cup. He emptied his.

He winked again. "Well, young lady—feel better?"

I winked right back at him. "Much better. And you?"

"First rate! Now, we can talk, eh?"

"Yes," I said. "We can talk."

"You were going to tell me something?"

"That's right," I replied. "I was going to tell you something, Dr. Cramer. I was going to tell you that I know all about it."

He blinked again. I kept smiling as I went on.

"Yes. I know just how it is supposed to go. Percy and Olive put you up to it. They will inherit and give you one-third. The time was indefinite, but when I came home distraught tonight they thought it a good idea if you acted at once. Miss Tooker knew I might have an attack, anyway, and she would act as a witness. Not that a witness would be needed. You would certify as to the cause of death. My heart, you know."

Dr. Cramer was perspiring. The tea had been quite hot. He raised a hand. "Mrs. Olcott—"

"Please do not interrupt. I am not finished. I was telling you about the plan. In half an hour, or less, I will have a seizure. You will go downstairs and tell Miss Tooker to phone the Deans at their dinner party. Then you will return and endeavor to help me. Naturally, it will be too late. By the time my beloved daughter and her husband arrive, I shall be dead. That's the way it is, isn't it?"

"But—"

I stared at him. "You wonder how I know? So do I. I cannot explain the power I have. It is enough that I possess it. I can read your mind."

"Then—"

I inclined my head. "Please do not trouble yourself to speak. Reading your mind, I know what you meant to say next. You wondered why, knowing these things, I permitted you to poison me. You wonder why I would trust you, knowing that you are a treacherous, hypocritical—"

HERE I used the masculine form of the epithet Percy had thought of in connection with me.

His eyes bulged. Apparently he wasn't used to such language. He had turned red as a beet.

"Yes," I whispered. "You wonder why I allowed you to poison me. And the answer is—I didn't."

He tugged at his collar and half-rose from the chair.

"You didn't?"

"No." I smiled sweetly. "When you brought me the napkin, I switched our teacups."

I do not know what poison he employed, but it was efficacious.

Of course, his excitement helped speed the process along. He managed to stand

erect, but only for an instant, and then sank back into his chair.

He died there.

I watched him die. For fifteen minutes I observed the process of disintegration. His voice failed almost immediately. His head wobbled. He frothed and retched. His eyes dilated and his face was purple, except around the mouth where he bit his lips.

I WANTED to read his thoughts, but there were no coherent thoughts any more. Only images. Words of prayer and blasphemy commingled, and images of desperation. Vile things. And then the overpowering mastery of pain blotted out everything. It hurt my head to read his mind, so I took off the glasses and just watched.

It made me tingle all over to see him die.

At the end he had convulsions. He tried to claw his own throat out. I stood over him and laughed right down his gaping maw. Not a very ladylike thing to do, I admit, but there was justification. Besides, it made me tingle.

Afterwards I went downstairs. Miss Tooker was sleeping and there was no one to stop me. I deserved a little celebration. I raided the ice-box and took up a tray loaded with turkey and dressing and truffles and kumquats—oh, they feasted well downstairs, my loving daughter and son-in-law!

I brought the brandy decanter, too.

I carried everything into my room. It was enough to make me quite giddy, climbing the stairs with that load, but once the door was closed behind me, I felt better.

I filled my teacup with brandy and toasted the figure sprawled in the chair before me. I mocked him silently as I ate. I inquired politely if he cared for a snack, did he want some brandy, it was delicious, and how was his heart behaving these days?

The brandy was strong. I finished all the food, every last bit of it, and drank again. The tingling was mixed with warmth. I felt like singing, shouting. I did both.

The teacup broke. I drank out of the decanter. No one to see me. I reached out and closed his eyes. Bulging eyes. My own eyes ached. Spectacles. Shouldn't have worn them. But if I hadn't, I'd be dead. Now he was dead. I was alive. Very much alive. Tingling alive.

More brandy. Heartburn. Too much food. The brandy was burning, too. I lay back on the bed. Everything went around and around. Burning. I could see him sprawled there with his mouth open, laughing at me.

Why did he laugh? He was dead. I was the one who should laugh. He had poison, I had brandy. "Liquor is poison to you, Mrs. Olcott."

Who said that? Dr. Cramer said that, the last time. But he was dead. I wasn't poisoned. So why did it hurt when I tried to laugh?

Why did it hurt my chest so, and why did the room go around and when I tried to sit up and fell face downwards on the floor why did I tear at the rug until my fingers bent backwards and snapped one by one like pretzel sticks, but I couldn't feel them because the agony in my chest was so much stronger, stronger than anything, stronger than life itself

Because it was death.

I died at 10:18 p.m.

3. Percy Dean

AFTER the whole affair was hushed up, Olive and I went away for a while. We could afford to travel, now, and I made arrangements to have the whole place remodeled while we were gone.

They really did a beautiful job—money was no object. I told him—and the results did us proud. It was about time, too. All those years wasted, sitting around and waiting for the old lady to die; yes, it was about time.

Now Olive and I could really hold our heads up in the community. No more snubs, no more covert insults, no more gossip about, "Mrs. Olcott's son-in-law . . *parvenu* . . not altogether the sort of person who belongs."

I swore to myself that all this would be changed. Olive and I would take our rightful place in society, at last. We had the background, surely, and now there was ample money to move in the best circles, to entertain.

To entertain. That was the first step.

The costume party was really Olive's idea, although I was the one who tied it in with our "house-warming."

"There's a certain atmosphere of gaiety and informality about a costume party," I told her. "It will distract from the awareness of the guests; so many of them know about the—uh—unfortunate occurence six months ago, and an ordinary dinner party would be strained. But a costume party is just the thing."

"Maybe I could get that little dance troupe to entertain," Olive mused. "The Puerto Ricans, you know. They're all the rage this season. And we could use the garden, too."

IT PLEASED me to see her respond so enthusiastically. We fell to planning, determining whom to invite. Here is where my superior acumen came into play. For years I had been balked, frustrated by my ignominious position as a "hanger-on"; unable to associate on a plane of equality with the business and financial leaders of the community.

I seemed to attend their dinners and parties under sufferance, and was unable to reciprocate with invitations in kind. In consequence I was never able to broach certain ventures I had in mind regarding real estate and bond issues. I knew the key men and my propositions were completely worked out. All I wanted was *entree*. I could make money in this city; quite a bit of money. Now was the time.

"Thorgesen," I said, checking off the list. "Definitely yes. "Harker, if he'll come. And Dr. Cassit. Pfluger. A repulsive person, but I need him. And the Misses Christie. Hattie Rooker. Very good."

"If we have Hattie we must invite Sebastian Grimm," Olive reminded.

"Grimm? Who's he?"

"The novelist. Summering in town here. He's invited everywhere—simply *everywhere!*"

"As you wish."

We planned it all, sent out our invitations, and had a most gratifying response. The week beforehand was filled with endless details which engaged our time. As a matter of fact, it was the day of the party before Olive brought up a highly important matter.

"Our costumes, Percy," she said.

"Costumes?"

"This is a costume party, silly! And we've forgotten to select our own." She smiled. "You'd go well as a pirate."

I frowned. I dislike levity. The thought of wearing a costume repelled me.

"But they'll all be in costume," Olive told me. "Even dignified old men like Harker. And Mrs. Loomis has spent weeks, simply weeks, on her Watteau shepherdess. The dressmaker told me."

"What shall you wear?" I asked.

"Something Spanish, with a mantilla. Then I can wear the earrings." She peered at me quizzically. "But you're going to be a problem. Frankly, Percy, you're too tubby for the usual thing. Unless you choose to dress as a clown."

I almost spoke harshly to her. But it was true. I regarded my portliness in the mirror; my receding hairline, my double chin. She peered over my shoulder.

"Just the thing!" she announced. "Percy, I have it! You shall be Benjamin Franklin."

Benjamin Franklin. I had to admit it wasn't a bad idea. After all, Franklin was a symbol of dignity, stability and wisdom—I am inclined to discount those absurd rumors about his mistresses—and that was the note I was seeking. I depended upon this evening to impress the guests. It was a highly important first step.

The upshot of the matter was that I went down to the costumer, told him my needs, and returned that evening with a Colonial costume, including a partial wig.

Olive was ecstatic over the results. I dressed hastily after dinner, for our guests were expected to arrive early, and Olive merely glanced into the master bedroom and inspected me at the last moment.

"Wonderful!" she said. "But didn't Franklin wear spectacles?"

"So he did. Unfortunately, it's too late now to secure a pair. I trust the guests will forgive me this oversight."

The guests did.

I spent a most enjoyable evening. Everyone arrived, the liquor was good and plentiful, the costumes added the proper note of

frivolity, and the entertainment—although vulgar—seemed most well received.

ALTHOUGH a total abstainer myself, I nevertheless saw to it that the proper persons imbibed. Men like Thorgesen of the bank, old man Harker, Dr. Cassit, and Judge Pfluger. I managed to keep them around the punchbowl and their cordiality increased as the evening progressed.

I was particularly interested in getting Thorgesen's friendship. Through him I could gain membership in the Gentry Club, and sooner or later I'd worm my way into Room 1200—the fabulous "poker club" room where the really big "deals" were decided; millions of dollars in contracts casually assigned as the powers-that-be dealt their cards.

Sebastian Grimm put the thought into my head. "Party seems to be going nicely," he drawled. "Almost think it would be safe to leave the ladies to their own devices for an hour or so. You haven't a poker table available, have you, Dean?"

Poker. The very thing. A game in my house. Wouldn't it be natural to suggest another meeting at the conclusion of this game? Perhaps Thorgesen would suggest the Gentry Club next time, and I could remind him that I was not a member. "That's easily remedied," he would boom. "Tell you what you do, Dean—"

Perfect!

"There's a big table upstairs," I ventured. "Away from the crowd and the noise. If you gentlemen are interested—"

They were. We ascended the stairs.

I hate poker. I dislike all games of chance. I do not regard them as immoral, but I instinctively dislike a speculative venture where the element of risk is dependent upon chance.

But this was an exception.

I secured chips and cards. Thorgesen, Dr. Cassit, Judge Pfluger, Harker, Grimm and myself were seated around the table. I would have excluded Grimm if possible—the tall, thin sardonic writer was a disturbing element and his presence was of no value to me. But it had been his suggestion, and I couldn't very well shake him off.

Olive tapped on the door before we started our play.

"So there you are," she said. "I wondered where you'd disappeared to, Percy." She smiled at the group. "I see you're in good company, however. Would anyone care to have a luncheon sent up? We're serving buffet style downstairs in a few moments."

There was an awkward silence. I felt annoyance.

"Very well, then. I shan't disturb you. Oh, Percy—I found something for you. In—in mother's old room." She came up behind me and slipped something over my ears and nose.

"Spectacles," she giggled. "You remember, we couldn't find them for your costume. But mother had a pair in her drawer. Now." She stood back and surveyed me. "That does it. He really looks like Benjamin Franklin, don't you think?"

I didn't want the spectacles. They hurt my eyes. But I was overcome with embarrassment. I forced a smile and waved her from the room. The men were intent upon distribution of chips. Thorgesen was the banker. I pulled out my wallet and placed a hundred dollar bill on the table. I received a stack of twenty white chips.

They played for "blood." Very well. I smiled. "Now for some reds," I said. I placed five more hundred dollar bills on the table and received twenty red chips.

"That's better," I commented. And it was. For I meant to lose. A thousand dollars or so invested properly tonight in a losing game would almost guarantee that my membership be looked upon with favor by the other players. There was a deal of sound psychology behind my reasoning. I meant to lose, and more than that, to lose gracefully. Amiably. Like a gentleman.

But it didn't work.

I HAVE heard of clairvoyance, of telepathy, of sixth sense, of "card sense." These phenomena I have always discounted. Yet *something* was at work this evening.

For as I squinted through my spectacles at the cards, I could read the hands of the other players. Not their hands, but their minds.

"Pair of eights under. Raise. Get another. Two queens. Wonder if he's got a straight? Better stay in. Never make an

inside with those tens showing. Flush. Raise again. Bluff the others out."

It came to me in a steady stream. I knew when to drop, when to stay, when to raise, when to bluff.

Of course I meant to lose. But when a man *knows* what to do, he's a fool to drop the advantage. That's logic, isn't it? Sound business. They respected shrewdness, good judgment. How could I help myself?

I do not wish to dwell upon the actual incidents of the game. Suffice to say that I won almost every hand. That I was able to raise, to bluff, to "sandbag" as I believe they call it, and all with this marvelous flow of intuition, this veritable psychic sense which never deserted me.

I was over nine thousand dollars ahead when Harker cheated.

The strain of concentration was terrific. I paid no heed to time, to any extraneous circumstance or thought or movement. It was only the game—reading their minds—calculating my bets.

And then: "I'll keep the ace until the next hand," Harker thought.

I could *feel* that thought. Feel the strength, the desperate avariciousness behind it. Old man Harker, worth three million, cheating over the poker table.

FOR a moment I was dismayed. The next hand was being dealt. I concentrated. Harker had the ace of spades under his left sleeve on the table. He received a seven and an ace down, and an ace up. Three aces, if he could switch the seven.

I had queens, back to back, the down queen paired with a four. The cards were distributed—the fourth, the fifth. The others had nothing; Grimm a possible straight. Harker kept raising. I got another queen on the fifth card. I raised him back. Grimm stayed. Harker re-raised. He was gloating. The conversation grew animated. This was a vital hand; the pot was large. The sixth card brought me another four. Full house, queens up. A sure winner in almost any seven-card stud game. Harker had his aces. My pair of queens on the board bet—the limit. He raised the limit. I re-raised. Grimm dropped out.

They hung upon our last cards as the deal went out. I got a jack. Harker received the fourth ace. It almost hurt my head to feel the wave of exultation possessing him. He raised, I raised, he raised, I hesitated—and Harker switched cards. The fourth ace went under. The seven slid beneath his sleeve. That was what I had been waiting for.

I raised.

Harker raised.

"Six thousand dollars in the pot!" somebody murmured.

I raised. Harker raised.

Then, very deliberately, I called. I laid down my hand triumphantly.

"Full house. Queens over fours." I started to rake in the chips.

Harker's old man's monkey-face creased into a grin.

"Not so fast, my friend. I have"—he licked his thin lips eagerly—"four aces."

Everybody gasped.

I coughed. "Sorry, Mr. Harker. But has it come to your attention that you also have—eight cards?"

Silence.

"An oversight, no doubt. But if you will be good enough to raise your left arm from the table—there, underneath your sleeve—"

The silence deepened.

And suddenly it was filled with a clamor. Not a clamor of words. A clamor of *thoughts*.

They weren't thinking about cards any more. But I could still read their minds!

"The cad—the cur—accusing Harker—probably planted the card there himself—cheating—*no* gentleman—nasty little fat-faced fool—never should have come—barred from decent society—vulgar—moneygrubber—drove her to her grave—"

My head hurt.

I thought if I could talk, the hurting would go away. So I talked and told them what I knew, and what I thought of them, and they only stared. So I thought if I could shout, it might relieve the strain, and I shouted and ordered them out of my house and named them for what they were, but they looked at me as if I were mad. And Harker thought things about me no man could stand. No man could stand such thoughts, even if his head weren't splitting and he didn't know it was all lost, they all

hated him, they were laughing and sneering.

So I knocked over the table and I took him by his wizened throat, and then they were all on me at once, and I wouldn't let go until I had squeezed out the hurting, all of it, and my glasses fell off and everything seemed to go dim. I just looked up in time to see Thorgesen, over my shoulder, aiming the water carafe at my head.

I tried to move to one side, but it was too late. The carafe came down and everything went away.

Forever.

4. Sebastian Grimm

THIS will be brief. Very brief.

When I picked up those peculiar yellow-lensed spectacles in antique frames from the floor—slipping them into my pocket unobserved in the confusion attendant upon calling the doctor and the police—I was motivated by mere curiosity.

That curiosity grew when I chanced to overhear a remark at the inquest regarding the disappearance of the glasses. The widow, Olive Dean, spoke of her mother, and how she had brought the glasses home with her upon the night of her tragic death.

Certain aspects of that poker game and Dean's behavior had piqued my fancy. The statements at the inquest further intrigued me.

The legend, Veritas inscribed upon the bridge of the spectacles, was also interesting.

I shall not bore you with my researches. Amateur detection is a monotonous, albeit sometimes a rewarding procedure. Sufficient for me to say that I undertook a private inquiry which led me to a second-hand store and eventually to a partially-razed house on Edison Street. Research with the local historical society enabled me to ascertain that the spectacles had originally been the property of Dirk Van Prinn, he of unsavory repute. Legends of his interest in sorcery are common property and can be easily corroborated in any volume dealing with the early history of this city. I need not bother to underscore the obvious.

At any rate, my rather careful investigation bore fruit. I was able, taking certain liberties based upon circumstantial evidence, to "reconstruct" the thoughts and actions of the various persons who had inadvertently worn the spectacles since the time of their discovery in the secret drawer of old Dirk Van Prinn's escritoire.

These thoughts and actions have formed the basis of this narrative, in which I took the liberty of assuming the characters of Mr. Joseph Henshaw, Mrs. Miriam Spencer Olcott, and Mr. Percy Dean—all deceased.

Unfortunately, a final chapter remains to be written. I had no idea that it would be necessary at the time I opened my investigation. Had I suspected, I would have desisted immediately. For I knew, as Dirk Von Prinn knew when he shut the spectacles away in that drawer, that they were objects accursed; that his heritage of wisdom from his ancestor, the infamous Ludwig Prinn, was evil wisdom; that the lenses were ground, almost literally, in Hell.

Yes, I knew that the truth is not meant for men to see; that knowledge of the thoughts of others leads only to madness and destruction.

I mused upon the triteness and the obviousness of this moral, and not for anything in the world would I have emulated poor Joe Henshaw, or Mrs. Olcott, or Percy Dean, and put on the spectacles to gaze at other men and other minds.

But pride goeth before a fall. And as I wrote of the tragic fate of these poor fools whose search for wisdom ended in disaster, I could not help but reflect upon the actual purpose for which these singular spectacles had been created.

"Veritas."

The truth.

The truth about others brought evil consequences.

But—the truth about one's self?

"Know thyself."

Could it be that this was the secret purpose of the spectacles? To enable the wearer to look *inward?*

Surely there could be no harm in that. Not in the hands of an intelligent man.

I fancied that I "knew" myself in the ordinary sense of the word; was perhaps more aware, through natural predeliction and introspection, than most men, of my inherent nature.

I fancied. I mused. I believed.

But I had to *know.*

Yes, I had to know.

And that is why I put them on, just now. Put them on and stared at myself in the hall mirror.

I stared at myself. And I saw myself. And I *knew* myself. Completely and utterly.

There are things about subliminal intelligence, about the so-called "subconscious," which psychiatry and psychology long to discover. I know these things now, but I shall never speak. And I know a great deal more.

I know that the actual agony undergone by Henshaw and Mrs. Olcott and Percy Dean in reading the minds of others is as nothing compared to that which is born of reading one's own mind.

I stood before the mirror and *looked into my mind*—seeing there the atavistic memories, the desires, the fears, the self-deceit, the spawning madness, the lurking filth and cruelty, the slimy crawling secret shapes which dare not rise even in dreams; seeing the unutterable foulness beneath all the veneer of consciousness and intellect which is my true nature. Every man's nature. Perhaps it can be suppressed and controlled. But merely to realize that *it is there* is the supreme horror.

It must not be permitted.

I shall finish this account, presently. Then I shall take the "cheaters," as Joe Henshaw so appropriately called them, and destroy them forever.

The cheaters!

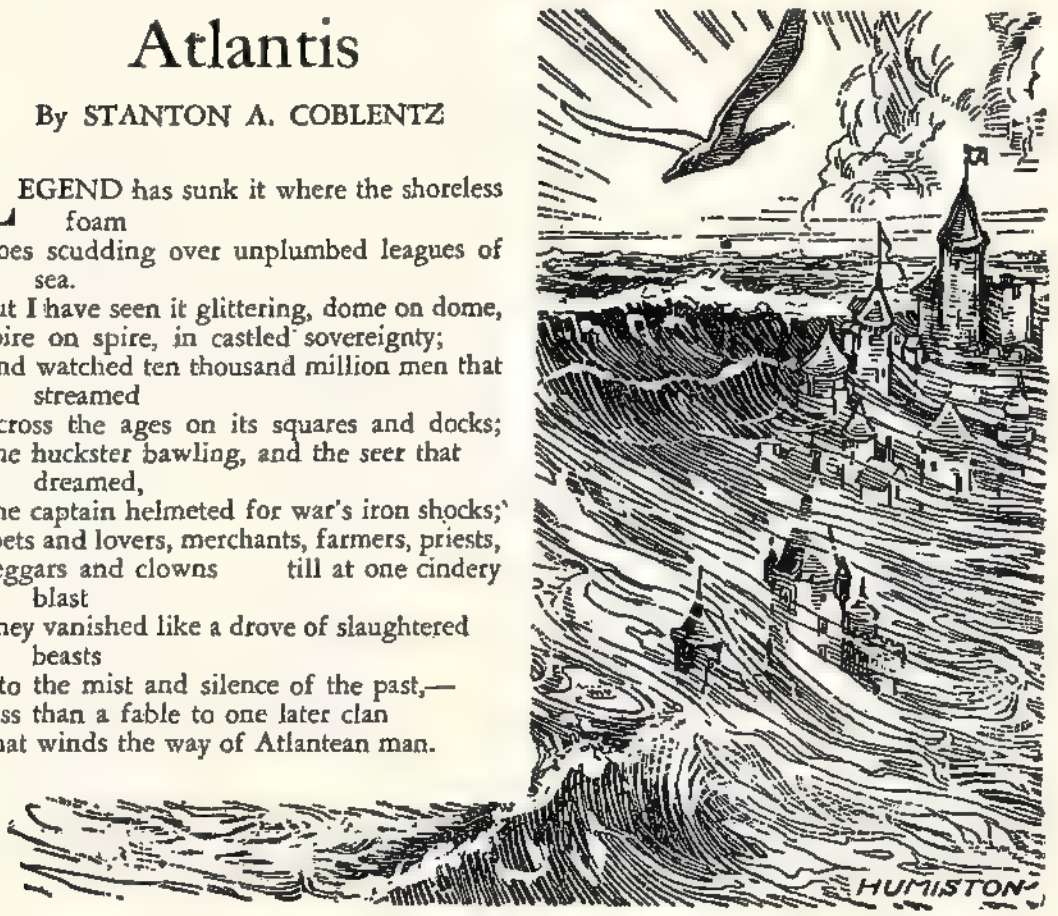
I shall use a revolver for that purpose; aiming it quite steadily and deliberately at those accursed instruments, and shatter them at a single shot.

And I shall be wearing them at the time. . . .

Atlantis

By STANTON A. COBLENTZ

LEGEND has sunk it where the shoreless foam
Goes scudding over unplumbed leagues of sea.
But I have seen it glittering, dome on dome,
Spire on spire, in castled sovereignty;
And watched ten thousand million men that streamed
Across the ages on its squares and docks;
The huckster bawling, and the seer that dreamed,
The captain helmeted for war's iron shocks;
Poets and lovers, merchants, farmers, priests,
Beggars and clowns till at one cindery blast
They vanished like a drove of slaughtered beasts
Into the mist and silence of the past,—
Less than a fable to one later clan
That winds the way of Atlantean man.



The Inn by Doomsday Falls

BY ALLISON V. HARDING

A haunted Inn, a cursed Falls, and an evil being who should have been but dust in a grave centuries ago. . . .

MISS EMMONS stopped worrying her grapefruit salad with the fork abruptly and rolled her eyes heavenward.

"There are stories, you know."

She was one of those talky, elderly women that no summer resort inn is ever without.

When Miss Emmons returned to earth again, Peggy murmured politely, "*What* stories?"

Why she should be polite, I don't know. After all, it was our table, but these elderly spinsters—"It's *so* jolly to chat with people, isn't it? Get acquainted. . . ." Peggy's like that. One of the reasons why I married her. There are others . . . as you can see!

"Well, my dears," the spinster went on, batting her eyes at me as though she weren't old enough to be my grandmother. "Some do say this inn is haunted! I don't put too much credence in these local ghost stories, of course. Every community has an old house that people claim is haunted, but I've heard about this place from several sources."

Her eyes begged us to beg her to go on.

"Well, I'd prefer a ghost to some of the customers!"

Miss Emmons let out a high-pitched titter.

"You are so droll, Mr. Holland!"

"What are these stories?" Peggy asked.

Needing no more than that, Miss Emmons took a breath.

"I first heard about it last year. You know, I've been up here before. Well, anyway, the cab driver who brought me out from the station, I think he was a little under the weather. He sang halfway out, and the other half he started telling me about the Falls."

Miss Emmons gestured towards the waterfall which could be heard and seen from the dining veranda. To me it was one of the nicest features of Phillips' Inn. The Inn itself stood in a low woodsy glen, sunlight-dappled during the day, dark and cool at night. To the west the land ran upward steeply, and from the height, precipitous for this section of the country, a waterfall rushed and tumbled down into the small stream that ran past the Inn.

There was a lake, shadowed and deep, above the falls, large enough for canoeing and boating, and this was one of the facilities provided by the Phillips' establishment.

I remember when one of the waitresses—local talent—told me the name, Doomsday Falls, I felt a spark of interest. But when I asked her if it had any particular meaning, she merely shrugged and turned away. But now, it seemed, my mild curiosity was to be satisfied—and I was afraid, at great length.

Miss Emmons prattled on and my mind began to wander to other things. I heard the words "Iroquois Indians" and "war canoes . . . over the falls . all killed . . ." but I'd taken my share of beatings from old maids at resorts.

ALTHOUGH this was my vacation, my thoughts were concerned with my architectural business back in the city, left for three weeks in the capable hands of my assistant.

Back in our room Peggy filled me in somewhat as she stood in front of the mirror and combed her smooth raven-black hair into a pageboy. It seemed that warring bands of Indians had fought on the lake

Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

above the Inn long years ago, and on one occasion, according to the legends, the Chief's canoe had been ambushed through the treachery of one of his braves. Canoe and warriors had been shunted into the fast-running end of the lake where the light vessel had been sucked into the vortex of water, and hurled over the falls, smashing its occupants to death on the rocks below.

"Miss Emmons says one of the Indians still shows up once in a while," Peggy finished her tale dramatically.

"That's fine," I replied. "Maybe we could trade some of your costume jewelry for a few thousand acres of land:"

Peggy pouted and I thought no more about it.

Although one goes to a place like Phillips' Inn for relaxation, after a while there is a certain routine that catches up with you. Maybe it's habit, because so much of our lives are concerned with routine. Anyway our days became pretty formularized, after the first few it took to find out what's where and when.

After breakfast Peggy and I usually played some tennis or badminton. Then in the afternoon I liked to catch a little nap, and Peggy took on a magazine or a best-seller down in the library. The rest of the afternoon we killed off at the archery range or perhaps some more tennis; if it was raining, a few rubbers of bridge.

In the evening I'd developed the habit of taking the path that led upland, paralleling the course of the stream, climbing almost straight up, it seemed to me, almost as precipitously as Doomsday Falls itself. Then the trail led along the shores of the lake that spread out from a narrow funnel just above the falls to form an oblong of water for some several miles.

Peggy had taken the first few after-dinner walks with me, but I was strictly on my own ever since she almost stepped on something that slithered across the path. I tried to explain that it was only a harmless garter snake, but you know how girls are.

THIS night I was hiking alone. We'd won a particularly pleasant rubber from the Stevensons, another young couple staying at the Inn, and to celebrate our revenge for a beating they'd given us a few days earlier, I'd had more than my share of an extraordinarily fine liqueur at dinner. I realized this as I completed the climb up to the path bordering the lake and winding in and out of trees just at its edge.

As I stood and surveyed the limpid purple waters, I regretted my last two glasses of the strong and heady quantro. I must admit that my surroundings were swimming a bit before my eyes. It was like scenery seen through shimmering heat waves. I walked rapidly along the path, hoping to clear my head, with my eyes cast downward watching the uneven trail so I wouldn't trip, my arms working at my sides.

I must have covered more ground than I had intended, for when I paused to catch some much-needed breath, I was in a totally unfamiliar part of the lake front. I realized I'd come around a little bend, for between me and the familiar oak trees, that signaled the falls and the glen, was a promontory nudging the lake with a scrubby finger of rock.

After I had admired the pleasing twilight scene, I was about to start back when a small sound caught my attention. It was simply a faint splashing noise. I looked quickly up towards the unfamiliar upper reaches of the lake, and there coming down the near shore was a canoe. Although I was too far away and my eyes still too fuddled to see the figure clearly, I could tell from the bright-painted sides that it was one of the Phillips' Inn craft. Then the vessel glided into a path of light thrown from the westward across the serene water, and the pounding of my heart was now more due to surprise than the exertion of my brisk walk. For I could see even at this distance the banded headdress and the unmistakable outline of two feathers!

Instinctively I crouched down beside a bush, I don't know why exactly. Slowly propelled by strong sure strokes, the birch-bark glided towards me until I could see the brown, molded body of the paddler kneeling amidships.

I BELIEVE I became quite frightened then and confused. It was the face, perhaps, that contributed, although even as I was perturbed, I was still cursing myself for too much liqueur. The Indian, for so he

was, was grim-visaged, and the dabs of bright warpaint accentuated the cruelty of his face.

I rose and turned, my only thought then to get back down the path, to reach Phillips' Inn as soon as possible, end this outre nightmare, get into bed with an icepack and something that would make me sleep off the unpleasant result of my overindulgence. As I got up I must have made a crashing noise in the bushes, because I saw even as I turned, the figure in the canoe swing his head sharply in my direction. He was abreast of me now although some dozens of feet out on the lake, but his motions were swift and sure. Even as my faltering legs found the path and broke into a run, I saw, looking back over my shoulder, the savage reach into the depths of the canoe and come up with a bow and then a long feather-tipped arrow.

I ran desperately, headlong, and when I saw him bend the bow with his mighty arm muscles, I dove to the ground. There was a twanging sound and something plucked at my coat. I looked in horror at the shaft that had piecered my pocket and spent itself in the ground on which I was lying. I twisted away, wrenching at the arrow feverishly with both hands, and then I was on my feet and running again.

I ran as fast and hard and long as I could, and finally there was the sound of the Falls. I stopped then a little ashamed of myself. The run had cleared my head, and all of a sudden I felt very foolish. I looked behind me—and of course, there was nothing.

I walked into the grounds of the Inn proper and hurried inside, hoping no one would notice my disheveled appearance. I found Peggy upstairs in our room reading.

"I'm glad to see you," she grinned at me. "You know, I was almost worried. Johnny, I think you had a little too much. Hey, what've you been doing? Rolling on the ground?"

I smiled self-consciously. "I guess I fell."

She helped me get to bed but not before I purposely brought up something that was brothering me.

"Peg, look at this." I showed her my coat and the tear. "You know, I just can't figure out how in the world . . ."

"Silly!" she said with wifely knowingness. "That must have been when you tripped and fell down. You ran a branch through your pocket. Good thing you didn't put your eye out up there . . ." she shuddered, ". . or get bitten by one of those awful snakes!"

"Guess you're right," I mumbled and fell into bed.

THE NEXT morning was for me a dull headache and a thick taste in my mouth. I was alone. A look at my watch showed it was a quarter to ten. Peggy must have gone down for breakfast some time ago.

I sat on the edge of my bed trying to get up ambition enough to dress. The events of the previous evening came into focus slowly and blended into fragments of near-forgotten dreams I'd had when I finally got to sleep. I crossed to the clothes closet and rummaged till I found the coat I'd been wearing. Yes, here it was with the rent in the cloth. I took it, hanger and all, over to the window and scrutinized it. I felt in the pocket on that side. There was my usual assortment of junk—a key case, a pipe, a small pocket knife.

I was about to lay the suit coat aside, go into the bathroom and shave and tell myself sternly in the mirror, "Johnny boy, you sure had too much last night," when I pricked a finger on something. I drew it out and looked. It was a sliver of wood about an inch long, and my early morning mind tried to catch up with the implications. It was definitely not a piece of dark brown live twigwood or bark, the end of some branch that might have caught my coat as I fell, for this was smooth, polished, and light-colored on the unbroken side . . like a splinter from an arrow. But there was nothing ancient about the wood. In fact, it may have come from one of the arrows on the Inn archery range!

I went down to the nearly empty dining room, took my coffee black and fast. I was trying to pull the pieces together when a voice at my elbow made me jump. It was Miss Emmons, burbling as usual. She flounced into a seat opposite me, draping some half-finished knitting on her side of the table.

"Your wife is a quantro widow," she needled.

So it serves me right, I told myself. People *had* noticed last night.

"Anyway, she told me to tell you she'd gone horseback riding."

I nodded absently.

"Well," pursued Miss Emmons, unwilling to allow a pause, "and have you seen our ghost yet?"

My head came up at that. "Just what is this tale?"

The spinster might have said, "You weren't listening when I told you and your wife yesterday," but instead she plunged ahead enthusiastically. This time I paid attention.

"An Iroquois tribe which at one time inhabited this central part of the state was divided into several factions. Among these there were two, the Senecas and the Mohawks," Miss Emmons thought the story went, "who bitterly contested the lake above and this surrounding land. Each claimed his people had prior rights. They had massacred each other down to the last man, or perhaps not quite," Miss Emmons paused for dramatic effect. She took a deep, delicious breath and continued, "No other tribes would ever move in. A warrior guarded this territory forever. Indestructible to the weapons of other Indians, and by and by this whole part of the land was left deserted. Isn't that romantic?" the elderly lady cooed. "And you know, Mister Holland, they say he shows up every now and then by the lake, by the falls, or even here around the Inn itself!"

Just then another elderly woman passed the table, but she had a considerably kinder face than Miss Emmons'. The two exchanged pleasantries. The other lady looked vaguely familiar.

"That's Mrs. Talmadge," my companion supplied in hushed tones. "She's co-owner, and you know, I'm afraid she isn't doing as well here as she should. Believe it or not—I know it's silly to say this—but the legend of the ghostly Indian doesn't seem to help business much. They told me that at the station," Miss Emmons leaned forward confidentially, "and I have an idea that Mister Falk, he's the fat one ." Miss Emmons blew air into her cheeks and described huge outward circles over her already large middle, ". . . well, he's the other co-owner, you know, and I think he wants to buy Mrs. Talmadge out."

TO ME, Mrs. Talmadge was just a face at one of the tables at mealtimes, but I had noticed Falk. He was a big man, dressed everlastingly in white ducks and a blue coat. He was, to put it truthfully, repulsively obese, with a fleshy white face totally devoid of expression. People took their complaints to Mrs. Talmadge but Falk was always around when the time came to settle up bills. I disliked him without reason, the way you do some people, instinctively.

"Just a bookkeeper here," Miss Emmons was going on. "He started out working for her, mind you, quite some years back. He still was when I first came here, and then, my dear, the next summer I found he was part owner, and recently, so I understand, he owns half the entire business!"

"If you'll excuse me," I interrupted, getting up. "I'm supposed to meet someone over by the tennis courts."

Miss Emmons wasn't insulted. She waved goodbye gaily.

Peggy and I re-unioned late that morning by the pool.

"There you are," she called, coming up to me in riding habit.

It was a phrase I didn't like anyway, and I was still grouchy. Later on, I entered halfheartedly into a tennis foursome but wasn't even sorry when we absorbed a thumping beating and I could quit. I gave Peggy's hand a reassuring squeeze when she looked at me with mock sternness and said, "I'll supervise your evening meal, young man!" Then I left.

I found old Mrs. Talmadge out on the back lawn. Some of the veterans were playing croquet and she was watching. I sat down beside her and received a smile that was half professional and half kindly. It made me feel like a heel to come out abruptly and say, "Mrs. Talmadge, what about this Indian ghost that haunts the place."

I felt more like a heel when the elderly innkeeper turned the color of my newest starched shirt. I thought for a moment she was going to faint, but she got hold of herself, took a tiny sighing breath and asked, "Have you seen him?"

I tried then to steer the conversation into a happy course, saying that I'd heard the legend but considered the whole thing a joke. It was as though my money was at stake, I realized suddenly, instead of Mrs. Talmadge's. Her replies were half-hearted. I knew as I left her that she was a very frightened woman. I cursed myself. It seemed a brutal way of ascertaining my own ability to conjure up hallucinations, especially after too much liqueur!

AGAIN I crossed paths with Miss Emmons. This time she seemed even more enthusiastic than usual. She wore walking shoes and was swinging a stick. I dodged the inevitable invitation.

"Oh, you young people," she effervesced, "you just don't walk enough, any of you! I asked your pretty wife and she begged off. Said she'd been up with you once and seen a snake. Imagine that! Frightened off by a little snake! Well, I shall do my hiking alone, it seems," and she strode off with surprising agility for one of her years.

The second part of my program was as obvious as the first, so that evening after supper—supervised carefully by an impish Peggy—I slipped down into a chair next to Mr. Falk in a deserted corner on the back terrace. I tried the weather, politics, but he showed a remarkable lack of interest and conversational ability.

When I tried, "How about this ghost, Mister Falk? So many people have mentioned it to me I'm kind of interested," his little pig eyes flickered, and for the first time he looked at me squarely.

"There is a legend," he intoned slowly.

"There also seem to be a lot of people around who claim that this Indian ghost has been seen," I egged him on.

—"Yes," admitted Falk. "He's a rather bloodthirsty savage, too."

"Is there any truth to the story?"

Falk shrugged his massive shoulders. "We don't believe in ghosts these days, do we? There have been a few strange occurrences though—particularly one unfortunate episode a year or so ago. A man-of-all-work around the place here was found in a rather strange condition. Death is always strange, perhaps you will say, but he was . . well, we don't discuss it here, but the authorities claimed he might have received his unusual injury by falling against a sharp rock."

There was silence then as the wind blowing from off the lake over the falls and down through the glen took with it his words, leaving only chill afterthoughts.

IT WAS nearly pitch black, I think, when I first heard it. If Falk had noticed before me, he gave no sign. I thought at first it was an animal. I'm not very familiar with the country, but the sound was high and piercing despite the fact that it seemed to emanate from some distance lakeward. Half-cogitating Falk's words and half-listening, I continued to sit there on the terrace, but the sound in the night gradually took more of my attention.

Yes, it was distinctly louder than a moment ago, coming nearer, and just as I spoke to the man next to me, I came to a jolting conclusion—that the sound was not some creature of the night but a human voice screaming far away in mortal terror!

Falk said he'd heard it too. It was too dark now to see the expression on his face but suddenly the mountain of him rose from his chair. He looked into the night, his face towards the cascading falls and the beyond from whence the noise was coming. Other guests had noticed now and they stopped whatever they were doing.

It was strange to stand there and hear this sound coming from above the falls out beyond where the lake ran under the black skies. Whatever it was, whomever it was, they were coming closer and yet we stood, I remember now, as the phrase goes, rooted to the spot.

It wasn't until in the last paroxysms of terror that the screams seemed to take definite form and the word "Help" floated down on the wind to us, that some of us took flashlights and started hurriedly up the path to the falls.

It was on my way through the murmuring glen that I recalled suddenly I hadn't seen the usually hearty eating Miss Emmons at supper nor had I spotted her since she left for her walk.

There was Falk and a young fellow whose name, I think, was Smythe, then a man who did odd jobs around the Inn, and somebody else. We redoubled our efforts and made

short work of the path until we'd reached the waterfall level. We started along the lakefront. Smythe and I outdistanced the others slightly.

It was Smythe who saw her first, but I was right on his heels. We stood and played our flashlights down on her. It *was* Miss Emmons. I remember I had a silly, trivial thought. I was a little conscience-stricken that I had sneered once or twice at the spinster's talkativeness—for now she would do no more talking.

SHE HAD been running; you could see that by the deep footmarks in the path. Then she'd apparently tripped and hit her head against a boulder. Falk and the others puffed up.

Was it the artificial light of our torches, or did the Inn owner turn a ghastly color when he saw the sprawled body, his small eyes flicking around into the darkness uneasily?

When I talked the gruesome scene over later with Peggy in our room, I found myself giving voice to the same sentiments that those of us in the darkness had buoyed our own spirits with; namely, that this was the kind of accident that can, and unfortunately, does happen, that there was nothing in it to suggest the supernatural. The tragedy was coincidental.

Still with the numbness of horror upon her, I could see Peggy's inquisitive mind working. She was that kind of girl and I was hardly in a position to criticize. I've been called nosy (I hope in a good-natured way) before myself.

There was talk among some of the guests of leaving the first thing in the morning. I thought of Mrs. Talmadge's worried, defeated face.

"I'm not really scared, Johnny," Peggy whispered to me that night up in our room. "It's all kind of eerie, but, well, I'm not scared enough to ask you to take me away from here."

I squeezed her hand.

"If a ghost did this, I'd like to know," I put in jocularly.

"And I'm so sorry for Mrs. Talmadge," Peggy went on. "I'll bet—," she stopped abruptly.

"Bet what?"

"It's nothing, really. I just had sort of a hunch."

I KNOW better than to push her, so I subsided.

The next day the Inn clientele was reduced by five. There were two new arrivals, people who'd booked their reservations earlier, and out of respect to Mrs. Talmadge, very little mention was made of Miss Emmons' accident.

A phlegmatic town marshal had come up, chewing at the end of a corncob pipe. He seemed bored by the whole procedure. After all, the deceased was "one of them city folks that're always doin' crazy things."

So the episode was over. A fussy woman, a distant relative of Miss Emmons, had arrived and taken charge, and that was that. But there were still the groups of people talking quietly around Phillips' Inn. The legend of the Indian ghost was obviously very prominent in their minds.

It was prominent in my mind when sometime after midnight the next night I woke up to feel Peggy shaking me.

"Johnny," her mouth was close to my ear and I could smell the perfume or her. "Johnny, wake up!"

I muttered that I was awake.

"Then get up and come to the window with me!"

I swung bare feet out onto the floor and padded over to where Peggy crouched by the sill. Our windows was at the back corner of the Inn. We were high on the top floor looking out over the glen and towards the falls. I looked. I saw nothing. My face must have been impatient. Anyway, Peggy grabbed my wrist.

"Wait! Wait," she hissed. "Maybe you'll see him."

"See *who?*"

Then there was a sound directly below us where a portion of the terrace ran. I switched my eyes downward. And from out of the shrubbery near the stone flangs a shape emerged. In dark clothes it blended into the underbrush. But not before rays of moonlight had outlined the huge, heavy familiar form.

"Falk!" I whispered. "But so what? He's got a right—"

"It wasn't Falk I saw before, Johnny."

My wife's fingers on mine felt cold. "I woke you up because I saw an Indian out there! So help me. I couldn't sleep and I was sitting here in the window. He looked like something out of another century. Darling, don't you think we ought to warn Mister Falk?"

"Warn *him!*" I harrumphed. "He can take care of himself. We ought to warn the Indian!"

But some of the chill from Peggy's hand transferred itself to me. I made my decision quickly.

"Look, Hon. Maybe we can get to the bottom of this right now. I'm going to sneak out and see what there is to see."

"I'm coming with you."

"Peggy, don't be ridiculous! You don't want to go snooping around in the middle of the night."

"If you're going, I'm going!"

"No!"

"Please, Johnny."

"No!"

FOR a moment I thought the argument would keep up, but she subsided like a small, pouting child. I kissed her, slipped into a pair of sneakers, trousers and shirt, put a flashlight in my pocket and took a heavy walking stick as an afterthought.

"You have all the fun," Peggy complained.

"I'll be right back. I'm just going to stick my nose outside for a minute."

I left her, crept down three carpeted flights and made the terrace door. The wind rustled slightly and the air smelled of night dampness and good clean outdoor things. I started across the grounds in the direction Falk had taken. I picked my way carefully, preferring the moonlight to my torch.

I found the course I was following led directly to the path that paralleled the falls and climbed upward to the lake front. Yes, here was a heavy footprint. The sort of footprint a man of Falk's size would make in the damp, soft ground. I couldn't be sure it was fresh, but I surmised as much and it was worth the chance. I seemed to be on the right trail.

Climbing the path gave me an unpleasant feeling. It was not much more than twenty-four hours since I and the others had hurried along this same way to find the broken body of Miss Emmons. It had been perfectly obvious from her face that the elderly spinster had been fleeing from something, and that something must have been very terrifying, for her expression was one of horror that even death could not relieve. Miss Emmons in spite of her loquaciousness, was a woman, I should have judged, of more than average courage. Most of her ilk are, for the loneliness of their lives takes a kind of splendid courage to face. And yet she had fled screaming from something that had come at her from out of the blackness and wilds of the upper lake.

I could imagine no tramp, no footpad frightening Miss Emmons to this extent, that she would flee headlong and hysterical at her fastest pace along a dark and uneven trail. No, there was something else up there, and the only person that we knew had seen it was dead!

I REACHED the leveling-out of the trail. The lake was a smooth dark patch at my right. I chanced a couple of small pushes on my lamp. Yes, there were Falk's footprints. It must be he. I went on, occasionally flashing my torch. The wind was cool up here blowing off the lake. I wished I'd thought to put on a sweater or a coat.

There was no sound ahead of me, and I thought abruptly that this was probably a wild-goose chase. The prints that resembled Falk's evidently were his, but hadn't they been made the earlier time we'd come up last night? I paused undecided. There was a faint rustling ahead of me that alerted my senses, but the breeze was blowing a little harder now, playing with the brush and thickets around me.

Still undecided, I half-turned, and as I did as if to darkly forecast the future of my venture, the moon fled under a cloud. The sudden blackness caught me unawares. I tripped my flashlight again, found the path. I took the first step of my retreat. I took the second. And then quickly, two things happened. The sound near me, I had thought the wind came suddenly again, but even as I knew I'd been wrong in its diagnosis, a heavy blow caught me on the side of the head.

In falling I half-turned. I was still con-

scious though sick as I went down. I caught a fleeting glimpse of my assailant—good-sized, with the shining copper skin of an Indian warrior. Even as the muscled hand rose to deliver another blow with the stone-headed club, the painted face grinned hideously and the two feathers in the headdress dipped in sardonic salute.

The first blow had been a glancing one. Even though the second was more squarely struck, I'd been able instinctively to roll my head and thereby take away some of the force. I was out for I don't know how long, but at least not for good.

When I came to, I found myself lying on my side. I got up slowly, very carefully, as the memory of my attacker came back to me. Groping around on all fours I finally found my flashlight which had rolled into a thicket when I'd fallen. I fingered the side of my head ruefully and then chanced a quick look around with the torch. Here was the path back to the Inn, but my attention was caught by something on the outskirts of the little clearing in which I stood.

IT CAUGHT my attention like a waving flag. It was a piece of cloth hanging on a branch. The reason I jumped towards it throwing caution to the winds was because I recognized the unusual and colorful pattern of the square of tattered material, I should know. Peggy had had it made up specially for a skirt. This piece came from that.

The yellow beam of my torch on the ground showed footprints, and feverishly I tried to differentiate between them. Here were my own. There—I surmised, perhaps the oblong impressions of a mocassin—made by the Indian, I guess. Then there were smaller prints, and my heart flopped in my throat. Darn little Peggy! I'd ordered her not to follow me but she just couldn't resist pattering along behind thinking how cute of her it was—and it was! Except that this was no practical joke. We were fooling with something deadly. Something that struck from out of the darkness with lightning suddenness.

I was befuddled further when another set of tracks showed up not far from our three. Then with a start I realized that they were the huge impressions of Falk. He'd been here too. Perhaps he'd seen, perhaps he hadn't. Friend or foe, I knew not.

Luckily, the earth was still damp from the afternoon rain, and I followed the prints quite easily. The Indian's were heavier, and even I, with my lack of experience in such matters, knew what that meant. The impression from Peggy's small feet had disappeared. The redskin was carrying her!

I drove myself on despite the fact that I was still dazed and the pain from my bashed head was growing into a thundering pressure at my temple. I knew I was walking farther up into the upper lake land than I'd ever gone before, and then, entirely by chance, I got a break. It was unlooked for and unintentional, but I'd had so many bad ones, it was only right that something should go my way.

The wind was blowing strongly towards me from straight ahead. In its natural sighs and rustles, I heard something else, a muttering that was fully human in origin. I moved forward and the sound guided me to a higher promontory of land, looking directly down into a small clearing. The moon was low in the sky now, but there was enough light for me to see, and I realized quickly that only the direction of the wind had enabled me to find this place by the low gibberish that rose from the figure below.

My straining eyes finally preceived another figure. This was smaller, propped up against a gray boulder, bound hand and foot. My Peggy! The moonlight touched softly against the bright patterns of her skirt.

The Indian, and I recognized him as my assailant from earlier, was crouched before her, sitting cross-legged, waving his fists in the air though praying to some unseen diety. He was as flesh-and-blood, as real as the lump on my temple. There was no legend, no ghost warrior about this one. The painted creature was making the aimless motions of some heathen pantomime.

EVEN though I had nothing but my walking stick, action was imperative. I feared for Peggy. There was not a moment to lose. This creature, even though no ghost, was not entirely normal. I vaulted over the stone crag in front of me, leaping downward onto the lower land and running for-

ward at the Indian. Twigs snapped and bushes rustled as I sprinted headlong. The savage turned, almost lazily. He rose from his crouching position and one hand reached for the heavy club at his side.

I do not know what the outcome of our struggle might have been. Suffice to say that I would have sold my life dearly with helpless little Peggy as the prize, but the contest never came off. When I was almost within grappling distance of the redskin, I saw something over his shoulder that seemed to stop the blood in my veins. It was a black apparition and it rose from out of the forest, looming back of Peggy.

I stopped abruptly, breath whistling through my open mouth. In the darkness I saw the glint of something, a long knife, and it was held dangerously near Peggy's neck.

It was anti-climactic, perhaps, when a booming voice rang out, a voice no part of any supernatural vision.

"Holland! Stay where you are or your wife dies!"

It was the heavy bass tones of Falk. I could see his face now as he emerged even more from out of the shadows. He motioned for me to drop my cane, and as I did, the Indian was upon me, pinning my hands to my sides, but there was no heart in me left to struggle, not with that hunting knife so close to a precious white throat.

With a quick wrench, the savage threw me to the ground, and then before I was able to overcome my apathy and shock, his quick hands had bound my wrists behind me with strong thongs. Falk came over then, still clutching the wicked-looking knife.

"What's the meaning of this!" I asked indignantly.

It is easy to be indignant lying flat on one's back but not easy to sound so.

The big white fleshy face leered down at me.

"The meaning, Mister Holland, is plain. You and your wife have stumbled on a matter that was none of your business. You've been too inquisitive for your own good."

MY CRAMPED position didn't help me think. Still, I fired back, "You and this creature killed Miss Emmons!"

Falk shook his head.

"Not exactly," replied the heavy man. "She had come across the Breed here," Falk chuckled, "and I guess it gave her quite a turn. People her age shouldn't try to run so. No, that wasn't in the plans, Holland. She was just supposed to return and tell everybody she'd seen the ghost Indian."

I nodded. I'd had something of a suspicion all along.

"Just a frame, eh, Falk? I understand you're in line to buy Mrs. Talmadge out. If the price got low enough, you'd make a killing, and after all, nobody's going to spend their yearly two weeks at a summer resort haunted by a bloodthirsty savage."

"That's it," the big man admitted with a sinister pleasantness. "You see, Holland, there is this legend. It's almost as old as the land around here. It may amuse a big brain like you, but local folks believe it and the Inn guests simply were non-committal until the 'skin made enough appearances, then they got scared and left. And we saw to it they got scared, Holland."

"What do you want with my wife and me?"

Falk didn't answer directly. He rolled his eyes upward at the dark heavens.

"That's a pretty big investment. I don't know whether you know the inn business. We've got a good locality here. The only resort of its type in the state, as a matter of fact.

"Run the right way, this place could make plenty of money. Not a few measly thousands a year, but plenty. I've got ideas. Mrs. Talmadge never cared for them, but I'm going to be running things. See, I believe people like, well, let us say, games of chances, gambling, and so forth. That spells revenue, Holland. I could make a million with this place in a few years—if I was the sole owner, and I'm going to be!" He paused ominously.

"What are you going to do with us?" I wondered if I ought to just shut up.

From within, a cold hand of dread was closing on my heart and throat. This man was completely ruthless, and he controlled the abnormal, wholly evil painted monstrosity that stood attentively at his elbow.

"Do? There's only one thing I *can* do. I'm sure it's evident to you and I'll kill two

birds with one stone, Holland, if you don't mind my putting it that way."

He laughed, and the Indian's lips curled in a cruel smile although I doubted if he followed the full conversation.

"Your destruction will further the Indian ghost legend to a degree that will kill off Inn business for the rest of the season—I know Mrs. Talmadge's financial setup; she'll have to sell out then—and it will also remove the only two people who, by accident or otherwise, have suspected that I was connected with this Indian. I'm hardly the man to wait for some legendary specter to do my work for me, so I arrange for my own ghost, Holland. It's worked out very nicely."

HE WHEELED, clapped his hands together and made some motions to the Indian. I was jerked to my feet. Meanwhile, Falk turned to Peggy, pulling her upright too. He took the gag from her mouth.

"Of course, there is no use screaming from up here. You're miles from the Inn and no one would dare come here even in daylight much less the dead of night, except ourselves."

They led us, the Indian in front, Peggy and I bumping together to be as close as possible though our hands were tied behind our backs, Falk bringing up the rear. Sometimes I wondered how the way was discernible, but the halfbreed had the cunning of his race and we picked our way through what seemed to me like impenetrable forestland.

Finally through the trees ahead, I could see we were approaching the lake. As we came out on the shore, I turned and saw the fear deep within Peggy's eyes but her chin was firm and she gave me a reassuring bump with her shoulder that said, Don't worry about me, Johnny.

I think I've read that you talk with the villain, you talk for time and they're usually voluble, wanting to explain how smart they are. Falk violated these principles. He was taciturn, concentrating on the business at hand. I did find out that the 'skin had spotted me on Falk's trail and they'd both doubled back to get me. Then, just after I'd been knocked out, Peggy came blundering along, flashlight burning for the whole forest to see. Falk couldn't be sure she hadn't seen him and the varmint attacking me, so they took her off just to make sure.

At least I was relieved to know that the redskin I'd spotted that night several days earlier was not the result of overimagination and too much liqueur but was our two-feathered friend, the feeble-minded halfbreed.

PEGGY and I were pushed unceremoniously down onto our backs. I saw her wince with pain as her hands were cut by a rock onto which the Indian shoved her. Angry words came to my throat but I choked them off. It wouldn't help her and it wouldn't help me. Falk stood before me, his mountainous form silhouetted against the lake that stretched out before us. He cleared his throat and then he mopped his face. He had something to say, I could see. The halfwitted Indian stood behind him, nervous with pleasant anticipation. Falk, I recall, was almost apologetic. He gave a little bow.

"You'll think it's silly of me, but this part I don't exactly relish. Of course it's got to be done, but you'll excuse me. You see," he said it with a half-smile that I shall always remember, "I've never seen two people scalped."

He mopped his face again and backed away from us, looking as though he were imagining the whole thing.

"We will then put you in a canoe, tow you out into the middle of the lake and head you down toward the falls. They'll find you tomorrow morning. But . . " the big man raised a hand, ". . . don't be disturbed about that part of it because you won't be aware of the unpleasant sensation of going over the falls, and you may count on me, Mister Holland. I will see that you and your wife are placed close together in the canoe, er, your bodies, I mean."

Again almost apologetically he bowed to us, turned to the Indian with a gesture and then moved off a ways into the underbrush.

The halfbreed came closer, and I saw him pick up the huge hunting knife Falk had had earlier. It was very big, very sharp, I guessed. I made motions and noises on the ground. It's almost impossible to get up when your hands are tied behind you though. My struggling was futile. I did manage to croak, "Me first, me first!" And

the Indian, with that strange demented half-smile, made the concession.

He squatted beside me and reached tentatively forward to place a heavy hand on my head. I noticed the pattern of paint on his face and I could smell the animal odor of his body so close. I dared not look at Peggy.

I wondered, strangely, if when an Indian scalps you, he starts at the back and comes forward or—then there was a sound. I don't think I would have heard it except that my senses in this last moment were so acutely tuned that the noise of an acorn dropping many yards away would be like a heavy thump.

THE sound I heard came from out on the lake, and it was high-pitched, almost beyond the audible range of man's hearing. It was a mournful, lost-soul sound. They say jackals at night on the plains make that sort of noise. I thought it was my eager imagination that made the sound seem both louder and nearer.

The look of intense listening on my face must have caught the breed's attention. He turned his head, and I saw my chance. I aimed a kick at his leg with one foot and attempted to hook the other back of his ankle and so pull myself erect, but the redskin with primitive cunning had anticipated even that. As he turned to look questioningly out across the dark lake, he had stepped back quickly from my side just enough to throw off my aim. My kick spent itself in empty air, and the grinning savage immensely pleased at my attempt which he seemed to have expected, bent again at my side, this time his hand on my head cruelly tight with a fistful of hair.

I watched his right hand fascinated, the brown knuckles tight over the handle of the long knife, the flexible wrist moving it slightly upward. I heard as though from far away Peggy's sudden cries. I tried to turn my head to look at her—for a last time—but the Indian's left hand held me tight, his mouth opened slightly showing yellow, snaggled teeth.

And then very slowly he entended the knife . . . I was wrong, I thought, with the attention to little things that so often typifies a moment of supreme horror like this. He would start not from the back or the front but from the side.

And then as the skin of my cranium tingled to feel the first sweet-sharp pain of the knife blade, there was another sound from the lake, a faint swishing, much nearer, and then a muted twang.

Events happened too fast then for my shocked brain. There was an unhealthy plopping sound, and suddenly through the Indian's middle appeared a driven shaft, the point almost touching my body, its force spent in the redskin's. The half-breed screamed and surged to his feet. He took hold of the arrow, his hands wrenching at the feathered shaft in his back. He pulled in a mad ecstasy of pain, and I saw the weapon come loose out of the ugly red-gushing hole in his side. He flung it to the ground and faced lakeward, all the time screaming horribly through pain-contorted lips.

Then little Peggy was on me, fumbling at the thongs around my wrists, crying and whimpering that she'd sawed through her fastenings on the rock. In a moment I was free. Behind us I heard the crashing of Falk approaching through the bushes. Despite my repugnance for the thing, I seized the long sharp arrow the breed had torn from his side. It was a better weapon than none. The hunting knife was too far away. The Indian had sunk to his knees, blood pouring from his side.

FUMBLING and falling, warding off the bushes with one arm, my other around Peggy's waist, I pulled her into the merciful darkness of the forest. We ran as in some obscene fevered nightmare, and as we ran, those calls and yells and screams behind us became dimmer. First Falk had been screaming my name in furious frustration. I could hear him as he drove his elephantine body around in circles looking for us.

Then the high sighing sound from the lake had come closer, and Falk's cries became those of someone in supreme terror.

We made the Inn somehow, some way. It was still dark and we gained our room unseen, to lie panting on the bed, shoulder to shoulder. I comforted Peggy as best I could and took a stiff shot of whiskey myself. I put the arrow I'd snatched up as a weapon

in the corner, hiding it from Peggy's eyes with the window screen.

The next day we agreed mutually to remain silent for a time. The Inn was buzzing with Mr. Falk's disappearance. Two days later a party of deputies searching upland found an outrageous thing. The marshal finally explained it on the grounds of irresponsible campers who had improperly extinguished their cooking fires in the woods. He would say little more.

I got the story direct from one of the deputies, a young chap who doubled in brass by driving a taxi.

"It was terrible, Mister Holland," he told me. "These two tied to stakes, they must have been, and the flesh burned right off them. Why, there wasn't much more left than blackened bone! I dunno who the other poor devil was but one was this here Falk. We found some identification. Burned at the stake, they was!"

The case ended there. The marshal was happy to find any halfway reasonable explanation for a most unreasonable occurrence. He was largely interested, this season anyway, in the vagaries of outdoor campers, "from the city" as he liked to put it, who refused to observe proper forestry precautions.

I NEVER told Peggy about the arrow. You see, when we returned to the city, I paid a visit to a very old friend of mine whose knowledge is even greater than his years. As the curator of the state Natural History museum and a leading ethnologist, I asked his opinion of the arrow which I brought him and which I had carefully put away since the night I'd hidden it in the corner of our Inn room.

Old Mr. Belknap, the curator, took it from my hands, seeming to weigh it in his worn, knarled ones. My eyes questioned him as he looked at the feathered butt, the shaft, and the arrowhead.

"Remarkable," he murmured.

I asked him just what was remarkable.

"Young man," he replied, "you should read Morgan or Schoolcraft. Or perhaps a treatise on the part the sorrel tree played in the making of arrows." His eyes twinkled through ancient horn-rimmed spectacles. "Where did you get this?" he asked when the humor of the situation had worn itself out in the dusty museum room.

I made up a vague, spur-of-the-moment tale which satisfied me as little as it apparently did Belknap.

"Can you tell me anything about it?" I pushed.

"I can tell you all about it," he replied. "It's a find, Holland. Centuries old, I'd swear. From its markings, the type used by one of the Iroquois tribes, possibly the Mohawks."

"Centuries old?" I repeated. "You're sure?"

"Yes," he answered, wagging his full-of-knowledge head. "I'm sure."

His faded eyes peered at me seeming to say, What are you going to do with it? The questions in my mind had been answered. I exhaled and made the gesture he had been hoping for. I made Belknap and his museum a present of the weapon. After all, a genuine Mohawk arrow of centuries ago in a near-perfect state of preservation is a rare collector's item—and I am no collector.

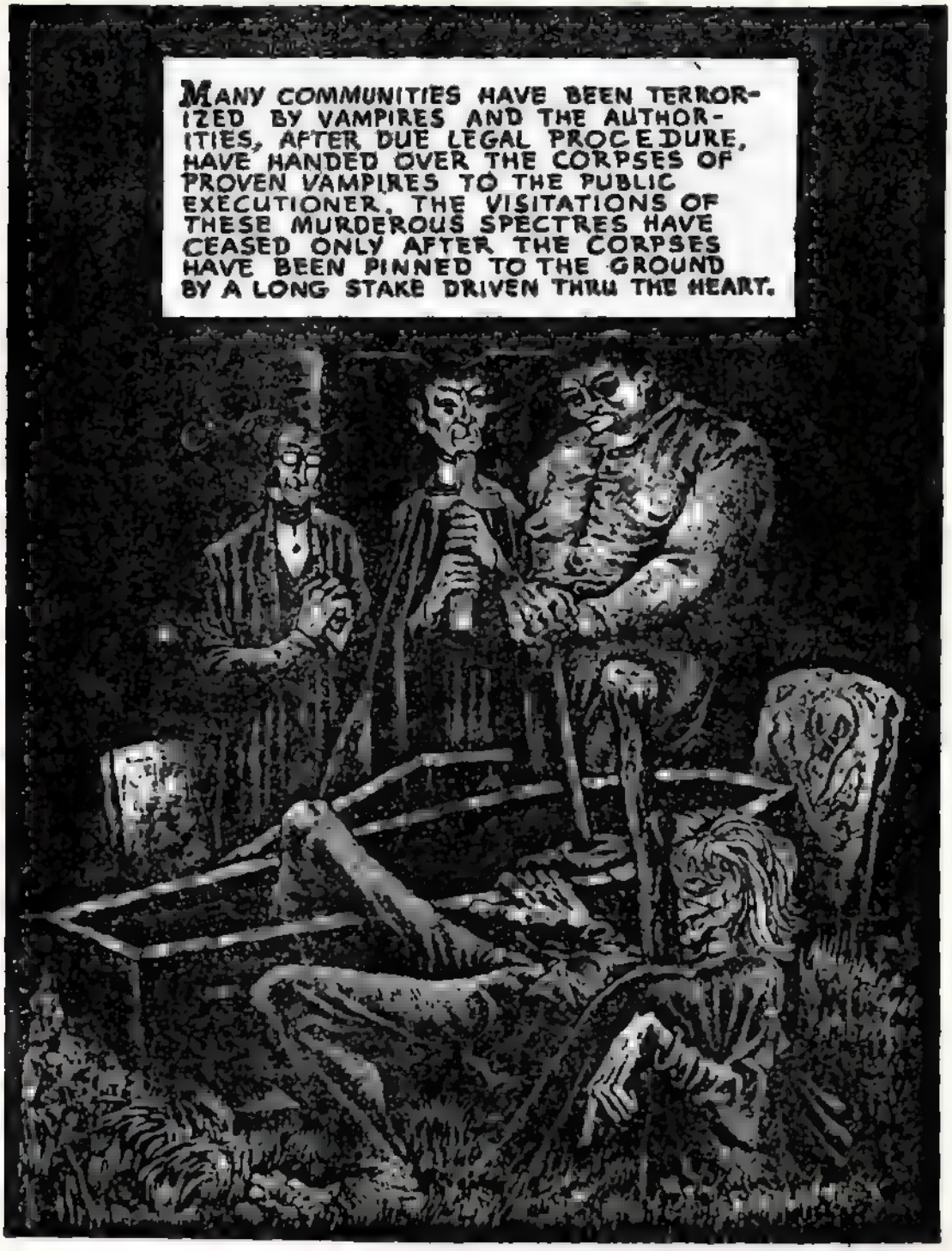
I'm sure the curator noticed the this-century dried blood on the shaft as he handled the precious arrow but he asked no more questions; just scuttled off after a profound nod of thanks into the dark back regions of the museum with his prize held in his hands.

As I said, Curator Belknap is a very wise old man.

WEIRDISMS

Vampires

Drawings — Lee Brown Coye
Legend — E. Crosby Michel



The Ghost Walk

BY STEPHEN GRENDON

Either you believe, or you don't; it matters not one whit to the Ghost!

CAMBERLY stopped before the softest chair in the Club. Larrett was in it. "Tell me, Larrett, what the devil's a ghost walk?"

Larrett looked up lazily, gray eyes smiling. He was old, incredibly old, with wrinkled skin like parchment, and his eyes deep. His hair had thinned a great deal in the last two years.

"I am surprised that a fellow architect, particularly one of your standing, should have to ask that," said Larrett. "It's usually a terraced part of an estate—or a garden path, what are the odds — along which the family ghost is presumed to take his exercises, safely away from the house, you see, so that guests are not needlessly annoyed."

Camberly gave an exclamation of disgust. "Can you imagine building one?"

"No, of course not."

"Well, those Hewetts who are having me to remodel the old Vaillie place have asked me to build one."

Larrett chuckled heartily. "Entrepeneurs! Good luck with it. Must you supply the ghost, too?"

Camberly smiled wryly and made no rejoinder.

"Some of these people expect everything and demand it," Larrett went on. "No sensibilities whatsoever."

"I don't much fancy the assignment. But there's a yew hedge or row not too far from the house and leading up to it."

"Just the thing!" said Larrett.

"Stones would spoil it."

"Put in just a few of them—make it look as if you'd done something. That should

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Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

satisfy them. Some of these people are incorrigible."

"Oh, Hewetts are fairly decent people," protested Camberly.

Larrett harrumphed and sank back into his chair.

Camberly smiled and went on his way. Being conscientious, he spent time looking up the lore of ghost walks and allied legends, and finally, with manifest reluctance, he surveyed the fine row of ancient yews leading up to the old house, which he had just finished restoring so skillfully that none but an expert was likely to observe his work. He compromised with his artistic conscience by avoiding flagstones altogether, and putting in, as a sort of counter to the row of trees, a low stone wall, thus setting forth the lane between. This satisfied him, for the appearance of an avenue was far more graphically achieved than it would have been with scattered flagstones; and so he left it.

Sherwood Hewett, who worked five days a week at some sort of executive job in the City, was enthusiastic, and his wife no less so. They made much of Camberly's work, so much, in fact, that he was unable to decline their insistent invitation to be their week-end guest at open house. He knew very well they wanted rather to "show him off," as it were; but they promised him interesting people, not the least of them being young Verrill Vaillie, who had been born in the house and was just in from Africa, where he had spent the past twenty years. Hewetts had bought the house from his agent, without realizing that he had planned a visit to England; but now that he was here, they could hardly do less than ask him down.

SO Camberly accepted, and at the week-end turned up prepared to see it through. The Hewetts were delighted to have him. There were a great many introductions, though the house-guests numbered only four persons, including both Camberly and Vaillie, the remaining two being a Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon Higbee, who were, like Hewetts, rather newly rich in a more obnoxious way. But the "open house" left the way open for many of the idly curious, including people in all walks of life from the village not far away, West Weir; Camberly could not help observing that these people seemed oddly dubious about not only their host and hostess, but also the house itself; he noticed several of them looking about as if actively searching for something, and seeming both disappointed and relieved at not finding it.

His interest, however, was shortly bound to Verrill Vaillie. Vaillie was in his late thirties, of a good bronze color—"The African sun," he explained—and muscular; he was a dark, intense kind of man, whose primary concern seemed to be the expansion of the agricultural resources of the Union of South Africa, for he held forth on this subject until it was brought home to him that Camberly was the architect who had undertaken to restore and remodel portions of the house.

"Forgive me!" he exclaimed. "It takes a little while to orientate one's self, don't you know! I'd hoped I might meet you, Camberly. I think you've done a very fine job here."

"Thank you. Is it much as you remember it?"

"Oh, yes, quite. Except for the obvious remodeling you had to do. And that seems to be at a minimum."

"By design."

"Of course. But, tell me, what's all this talk of a 'ghost walk'? I can't help overhearing our hostess's friends, the Higbees, burbling about it."

Camberly explained, somewhat embarrassed. He had already arrived at the conclusion that the ghost walk had actually been the Higbees' idea; they had overwhelmed Hewetts with it, and so it had been thrust upon Camberly.

"Well, it's odd you should have chosen that spot—though I suppose it's the obvious one, isn't it?"

"Why odd?"

Vaillie laughed good-naturedly. "As a boy, I had good reason to shun that place. They used to scare me with it; we called it the Goblin's Row. You know—the bogeyman principle, 'the Goblin'll get you if you don't be a good little boy,'—that sort of thing."

Camberly smiled. "It's a fine row of trees. I was just about to suggest that we walk down it—let's get away from these people for a while."

"Excellent. I'm with you."

They went out into the moonlit night. Off to the left, away from the row of yews, a white ferment of mists stirred and moved along the low, marshy ground there, spectral in the moonlight. The air was still, and somewhere a nightingale sang.

"This is like an evocation by Delius," said Camberly.

Vaillie agreed.

They came to the yew walk and set out between the hedge of stones and the row of trees. The trees made a dark mass, shadowing the lane, though here and there the moonlight touched the stone wall and shone briefly there, all the brighter for the yews and their dark shadow. The lane was approximately a quarter of a mile long; it led nowhere in this direction, save only into open country beyond the limits of the estate; but over the stone wall, the low fen area stretched away to knoll-like hills in the hazy distance. They walked in silence, savoring the night; a thousand perfumes and pungencies rose from foliage all around—there were herbs growing in the low ground, and their pungent fragrance lay here and there, pleasantly, mingling with the scent of roses from the garden beyond the yews on the far side.

They had gone perhaps a third of the way along the walk when Camberly cast a quick glance over his shoulder. For a moment he had thought someone else had started along the lane, but there was no one in sight. He had not altered his pace at all, but the conviction that they were no longer alone persisted. He went on ten steps, twenty, and turned again. This time he found Vaillie gazing at him quizzically. But neither of them said anything.

IT WAS maddening, but the illusion of being followed persisted with such strength that Camberly could not keep himself from looking still another time. Nothing. No one.

This time Vaillie said dryly, "I wanted to be sure of that."

"Of what, Vaillie?"

"That feeling of being followed."

"Oh, you, too!"

"Yes—but don't be surprised when I tell you that is the thing I remember from my boyhood and youth. That conviction of being followed by someone or something. I did, once, see something."

" 'Something'?"

"Yes, I put it that way deliberately. Something large and dark and in the form generally of a man."

"Don't tell me he was transparent, too?"

"No, quite the contrary. Substantial—but not something that ever caught up to me. I ran."

"I felt I had to turn," said Camberly.

"Yes. So did I. I resisted that compulsion, and particularly because I wanted to see whether you were affected the same way. You were."

They had come to the end of the row of yews now. Camberly turned, Vaillie with him; they stood there looking back. Camberly thought he saw something large and dark and hulking coming along the yews.

"Is there something?"

"I think not." Vaillie turned abruptly and began to walk around the yews to the garden side. "Just the same, if you don't mind—I'll have a change of scenery; let's see what you've done to the old gardens. We can go back to the house this way as well as any other."

Camberly assented. He could not help glancing once or twice curiously toward the yew trees; they walked parallel to them all the way, and he had the most extraordinary impression that they were being watched by a pair of malevolent eyes from the shadowed darkness of the lane they had just quitted.

Close to the house, and near the entrance to the lane, Vaillie paused again. He gazed curiously over to the lane.

"Just about there my grandfather was found dead," he said. "That much I know. His back was broken."

"Fall?" asked Camberly.

Vaillie raised his eyebrows. "From where?" he wondered. "He didn't climb trees unless he lost control of his faculties just that day." He shook his head: "No, he was just found that way. The doctor said he had been running. No sign of having stubbed his toe anywhere, either. There was a lot of hush-hush about it, and I don't know to this day what there is to it. You see, my father came into the estate right

after that, and I think he lasted only a year or two; then he died, too."

Camberly wanted to ask, urgently, how he had died; but he did not. Nevertheless, Vaillie told him.

"There used to be a sort of hitching post —very old stone thing—at or near the other end of the yew walk, a little off-side, I think. He came in from riding late one evening and apparently had an accident. It looked as if he had fallen from his horse while dismounting, squarely across that thing; his neck was broken. Not long after that mother had some changes made here—took that thing out, for one—and then we went down into the Cotswolds, to live a while with her parents. From there, years later, I shipped for Africa."

With this, however, Vaillie seemed to have talked himself out; he said nothing more, but led the way to the house, where in a little while he and Camberly were separated among the guests. Camberly saw him only at a distance for the remainder of the evening, which disappointed him, for he felt there was something more to Vaillie's family tragedy, though there was no assurance that Vaillie himself knew of it.

WHEN he retired for the night at a late hour, he found that his room directly overlooked the ghost walk. He stood at the window gazing down at it. The yews, which came hardly up to the second floor of the old house, had a kind of sheen in the moonlight; the row of trees cast less shadow over the lane itself, now that the moon rode higher; the stone wall was entirely free of shadow, and the larger part of the lane itself lay bathed in unbroken moonlight. The wall, Camberly decided, had been the right touch; flagstones would certainly have spoiled it. He stood admiring his work now; the whole walk seemed exactly right—except for that shadowy break at the far end.

He could not recall what stood there in line with the center of the lane; seen from this vantage point, it was inapropos.

But as he turned away from the window, he reflected that there could be nothing there; he had been careful of every detail; moreover, not more than three hours ago he had walked that way with Vaillie, and there had been nothing there. What was it Vaillie had said about an old-fashioned hitching stone, or something of that sort? It must have been an optical illusion, arising from his memory of Vaillie's words. He turned back to the window.

He stared out, feeling a kind of chill creeping up along his spine. An illusion, certainly. There was nothing at the end of the lane. But there was certainly a darker shadow over against the avenue of yews, a hulking blackness, like a man waiting for someone was trying to keep out of sight. But even as he looked, this seemed to fade and dissolve away. The ghost walk was right, the yews and the stone wall bright in the moonlight, and the lane itself—all were as they should be. Shaken, Camberly turned from the window, almost unconsciously drawing the curtains.

He went to bed convinced that there was something wrong about the ghost walk, and he woke up with the same conviction firm within him; he had thought sleep might mitigate his alarm, but not so. He spent a restless morning, therefore, waiting for Vaillie to get up, but when at last Vaillie came down, he was in haste to get away; he made his excuses to his host and hostess, and the best Camberly could do was to drive him to the station in West Weir.

"Sorry to run off like this, Camberly," he said easily as they stood on the station platform. "But I'm soaked with Africa, and people tend to suffocate me. Especially the average run of our host's friends. Deliver me from people like the Higbees!"

Camberly made the appropriate remarks, and then, a little desperately, he told Vaillie his experience of last night. He watched Vaillie carefully as he spoke, but there was no gleam of intelligence in Vaillie's eyes.

"That's curious, you know, most curious, admitted Vaillie. "It could have been an hallucination—but it checks so exactly with some of my own experiences. But if it was not some kind of illusion, what was it?"

"I'd like to know. I have the feeling that there is danger lurking in that place."

"I, too," said Vaillie, and then at once Camberly knew, incredible as it seemed, that Vaillie was leaving Hewetts, not because of the obtuseness and insensitivity of the guests, but because of the ghost walk.

After the train had pulled out, Camberly walked the platform pondering what to do. If Vaillie did not know what lay behind the curious experiences rising from the ghost walk, who did? His family was gone now, all but he; if they had known anything, they had obviously not told him. But wait—if the family had lived at that old house for so long, there must be someone in the village of West Weir who could tell him things; Camberly remembered how oddly the villagers looked about the previous evening. The older the resident, then the better.

He went over to the station clerk and made his inquiry.

"Oldest person in the village with his faculties about him," mused the clerk. "That would be Dr. Irvine. He's close to ninety."

"Where can I find him, please?"

"Turn that next corner left, and he's the seventh door on your right."

Camberly thanked him and took himself off without delay.

DR. IRVINE was well-preserved; he looked more like seventy than nearly ninety, though his goatee was white, and his bushy eyebrows like snow. His skin was pink and not too wrinkled, and his blue eyes snapped and sparkled. Camberly introduced himself as an antiquarian interested in all sorts of lore; quite directly he said that he had heard hints, very guarded, of course, of some sort of curse on the Vaillie house or family.

The old man laughed heartily. "Absolute balderdash, my dear sir," he said, his laughter subsiding. "I think, though, I could tell you where that story got started."

"I'd like to know."

"It probably dates back to the old man—that would be Phineas, grandfather to young Verrill. He was rather a hard man to deal with, not very well liked by the villagers. With reason, of course. He had a terrible temper. But there were a few people who would work for him, and did—until the accident. That happened when the old man decided to work up that row of yews. There was one big fellow, slightly hump-backed—deformed perhaps a little more mentally than physically—who could work like an ox, and who, believe me, was worked like one by old Vaillie. For some reason, there was always a kind of tension between employer and employee; Vaillie never seemed able to drive him enough.

"Well, no one knows precisely what happened in the matter, but Burson—that was the big fellow's name—was killed on that job of moving out the old stones along the row of yews. There was some talk of carelessness and an argument with Vaillie. In any case, one of the largest stones fell off the cart, caught Burson just across his back below the hump, broke both his back and his neck. A nasty business. I was just in the vicinity, and I saw him. It had a funny look, and there was some doubt about certification, too. There seemed no way in which a flagstone of that size could have come down off that load unless it had been pushed; the load had simply been standing there, being loaded. Of course, there was all that talk, and no one would work for Vaillie after that.

"Now, then, the story stems from that and the fact that old Phineas was found dead not too long after that in rather peculiar circumstances, with his back broken. And then something of the same sort happened to his son, Verrill's father, less than two years afterward—that seemed an accident, though an odd kind of one. After that the family moved away; the house was left standing, and, as usual, people passing after dark began to imagine thing."

"What kind of things?"

Dr. Irvine shrugged. "Oh, someone lurking in the yews—that sort. Of course, when Perry Murchison—our best-known poacher—was found dead there about seven years ago, that settled things for the superstitious of the community."

"What about Murchison? I'd not heard that?"

"Oh, he was pretty nearly the victim of a fight. He wasn't well liked, and it was bound to happen some day. He not only poached, but carried tales about his fellow-poacher. It was only a matter of time before someone caught up with him, and that it should have happened there, while somewhat coincidental, is natural enough because the place was deserted, Perry made the region a sort of stamping ground of his, and it was therefore ideal for someone to wait for him. No one knows who did him

in, of course, though some suspects were examined." He shrugged. "You know how these things go. Murchison was always just a step ahead of the law, and the law couldn't become too upset about his death."

Dr. Irvine's iconoclasm left less impression than his inferences. If what had happened in connection with the ghost walk were just coincidence, then certainly it was a most extraordinary series of coincidences. But if not, what then? He mentioned psychic residue; did Dr. Irvine consider that some basic force might lurk about the avenue of yews? Dr. Irvine remained iconoclastic.

Camberly, however, was not satisfied. If anything, he was more troubled than before; he had added something to his store of knowledge, but he had not got anything definite enough to act upon. He could not very well go to either of the Hewetts and tell them that the ghost walk menaced the safety of anyone who walked it, especially after dark. They might be indulgent with him, but they would certainly think him a fool. Evidently Vaillie had had the same conviction; he had taken flight rather than face the issue. And, too, how explain it? How convince a materialist like Hewett that it was just possible that some crime had been committed there upon that poor, unfortunate laborer, Burson, and that as a result a malevolent psychic residue lurked among the yews to repeat that crime in some manner or other? Not likely that anyone would credit him with being in his proper senses.

And, perhaps, who could say, his imagination had got the better of him—just as imagination, according to Dr. Irvine, had overcome the good sense of some of his fellow-villagers? Nevertheless, Camberly spent the rest of the afternoon poking about West Weir, trying to turn up more about Vaillie House. But in this he did not succeed; he got only hints, dark mutterings, curious questions for all his efforts, nothing at all substantial; so that by the time he set out for his host's house, he was more doubtful than ever.

IT WAS late twilight when he reached the house. He put the car away and came around to stand and look at the ghost walk. Once more the moon lay low in the east, the night was enchanting, a soft wind rustled the leaves of a nearby bush. The concept of a haunted ghost walk was, frankly, ridiculous. Camberly came and stood at the very edge of the ghost walk and looked along its length. Nothing untoward, nothing but as it should be.

With only the faintest tremor of doubt, he began to walk its length.

Halfway along, the compulsion to look over his shoulder was on him once more. He resisted it, but at the same time he walked a little faster. The compulsion grew stronger, steadily stronger. Not far from the end, he turned, but there was nothing. After all, he reflected, Vaillie had been able to resist that urgent pressing to turn and look behind him; why could he not? He came to the end of the walk and turned boldly to look along the shadowed yews. Moonlight lay clear and winelike at the far end of the yews, and nothing stood between this end of the yew avenue and the other. Nevertheless, a dew of perspiration stood cool on his temples.

He took a deep breath, feeling more secure now, and began to walk back the way he had come. Up ahead the lights shone in the house, and the sounds of voices drifted out to him to vie with voices of frogs from the swampy fen country over the stone wall. He felt intimately shut in, secure, more certain of himself.

But halfway along, he was once more aware of the need to turn. It smote him with violence, it overcame him with urgence. *Turn, look!* his entire being seemed to cry out to him in high alarm. He gritted his teeth and told himself he would not yield to this fruit of superstition, but the clamor set up within him quickened his pulse and broke down his resistance.

He turned.

Bearing down upon him with a peculiar loping gait along the avenue of yews, was a dark, hulking shadow—as of a tall, well-muscled man with a hump on his back. One instant it was there, the next it was gone. Terror burst within him; he waited no longer. With an instinct borne of acute awareness of mortal danger, he fled up the walk, and burst through the yew hedge into the garden beyond, not caring what he

trampled; not even conscious of the rose thorns tearing at his clothes. He ran through the garden, across the lawn, and flung himself into the house through the front door.

Hewett's butler stared at him in wonder, but Camberly ignored him. He stood with his back against the door, and when the butler would have come to his assistance, he waved him away. There he stood, getting his breath back, trying to quiet his raging pulse.

Attracted by the noise of his entrance, Hewett himself came out of the dining-room, and stood briefly on the threshold looking inquiringly down the hall, a glass of sherry still in his hand. Then, recognizing his guest, he came solicitously forward, dismissing the butler.

"My dear fellow, what in the world happened to you?" he said. "You look just about done in."

"I'll be all right in a minute or two," said Camberly.

"Look here, take this sherry. I've not touched it."

Camberly gulped it gratefully. He took a deep breath.

"Hewett, listen to me," he said urgently. "For God's sake, don't let anyone go along the ghost walk after dark."

Hewett started a little, but in a moment he said, "Now, come, Camberly. Better lie down and rest a bit. You've been under quite a lot of strain."

"I'm not joking, Hewett. I've never been more serious in my life." Looking up, he saw that Higbee was coming to join them. Oh, God! he thought, that ass Higbee will make a shambles of me.

"But why, Camberly? I don't understand. . . ."

"I'll explain later. There's something in that walk—something deadly. . . ."

Higbee's outburst of laughter told Camberly he had not kept his voice low enough. "A ghost, Camberly? How devastating! Let's hear about it."

Hewett told him.

"What a taradiddle!" exclaimed Higbee. "What *do* you think, old man? But at that, it's only a good story. Quite in the tradition, too. So you made a narrow escape, eh?"

"I did—but you can find out if you take the trouble to do it that three other people before this didn't."

Higbee smiled indulgently. "Just what happened, Camberly?"

Despite his unwillingness to do so, Camberly felt it incumbent upon himself to tell what had happened.

Higbee shook his head pretentiously. "Lore like this gets its start from some imagined source, and gets body because someone incorrectly interprets accidents and the like, and is perpetuated by people—well, people like yourself, Camberly—imaginative, overly sensitive to impressions, and fundamentally alarmists by nature."

Camberly excused himself and went to his room. Hewett presently came up with a whiskey and soda and something to eat, at the same time offering apologies for Higbee's bluntness.

Camberly shrugged away Higbee's manner. "Just the same, I'm quite convinced that something dangerous is lurking down there. I don't offer to explain it; I can't. But I know what I felt, and I know Vaillie felt it, too—because that's why he left today."

At this, however, a faint skepticism came into Hewett's eyes. Camberly was still; there was no good in going on. As Hewett left him, he was certain that the garrulous Higbee was already regaling the company below with an account of Camberly's adventure, as Higbee saw and explained it, and he imagined that every burst of laughter from below was obscurely at his expense.

HE LAY quietly for the rest of the evening, but he did not sleep. He heard the dinner-guests leave, and presently he heard the house-guests come to bed, and the Hewetts, too. The house settled down for the night, all the noises diminishing to the creaks and groans all old buildings make in the darkness. The discreet opening and closing of doors, too, fell away, the bedroom conversation ceased. But all was not yet still.

Presently a door opened down the hall, and someone came along it. Walking in carpet slippers, Camberly decided. He heard the steps receding down the broad stairs and soon thereafter the outer door opened and closed. Instantly he was on his feet and at the window.

Down below, across the lawn, walked

Higbee, clad in dressing-gown and slippers, and smoking a cigar.

Camberly raised his window and called down. "Where the devil are you going, Higbee?"

Higbee waved his hand with the cigar at him. "I'm going to debunk your story. Any objection?"

"For the love of God, Higbee . .

Laughter was his only answer. He stood there, staring. He wanted to fall back from the window, but fascination and a hideous undercurrent of fear and terror held him there.

Higbee strode confidently along the ghost walk. The moonlight kept him plainly in sight. He went to the far end without once turning, and there, preparing to walk back, he waved jovially at Camberly. Then he started back, almost leisurely, his entire manner conveying a kind of contempt for the architect watching him from the window.

He had gone perhaps a third of the way, when something impinged upon his consciousness, and he turned. Camberly saw what appeared to be a part of the yews' shadow detach itself and swirl into seperate life. At the same instant, Higbee, dropping his cigar, began to run. His dressing-gown impeded him, and he flung it off. But his weight impeded him more, and his lack of imagination prevented him from thinking to leap through the hedge and escape the ghost walk altogether.

Not far from the near end of the ghost walk the hunched, loping mass of darkness fell upon him like a cloak. There was a cry of terror, and then an ugly, horrifying sound, like the crunching of bones. Higbee fell to the ground, as if flung, falling across the stone wall, and the dark hulking shadow dissolved and vanished.

Camberly found his voice at last and shouted.

In the hall he encountered Hewett, pulling on his dressing-gown. He explained as he ran down the stairs.

But Higbee was beyond iconoclasm of belief. It was as if he had been caught in powerful arms and the life crushed from him; both his back and his neck were broken.

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The Last Adam and Eve

A GROUP of us had gathered from the various planets for a friendly conclave in the Kehilan Gardens on Venus. I had been occupied for several years on the Earth safeguarding the man who had been chosen to make the records of Earth's vanished civilization.

My friends asked me for the story of the great cataclysm. It follows:

They who rule this Solar System, Neptune's lords of Destiny, had chosen as my responsibility not the assistance in the mass migration of Earth's humanity to Neptune as they poured through the wide open doors of Death in that cataclysmic hour. But they charged me with this guidance of this one, Professor Jameison Adam, who was to survive.

It was foreseen that the shifting of the ocean masses and the terrific gales which would result from the planet sliding within its atmospheric sheath would destroy every living thing upon the Earth's surface.

Consequently Professor Adam must be protected and placed where he could live safely during the long weeks of the hurricanes.

Adam was ideally suited because of his training and because of his colossal egotism to prepare certain records which the Lords of Destiny chose to save for the civilization which will evolve upon the Earth after several millenniums. The fact that sexually he was almost passionless further qualified him for living in the environment in which he was placed.

I closed my affairs on Venus and went to the Earth. In my invisible body I was led to Professor Adam at his office in State University. Another one of the invisible agents of the Lords of Destiny brought in the representative from that vast underground labyrinth where we had chosen to place Adam at the moment of the crisis. It was to be one of those places where his government had stored its vast deposits of useless gold.

A plausible excuse had been prepared and Adam felt highly honored at the invitation to precede secretly to the great vault where he was to render certain scientific services (or so he and the official presumed.)

All of this had been worked out for us. My duty was merely to remain close to the Professor (in my invisible consciousness, of course) and to make certain that no distraction prevented him from arriving at the vault at the appointed moment.

There were two others who were to be saved. One of these was Mrs. Eve McCluskey, a scrubwoman. She was merely an accessory. I shall refer to her as Eve.

The Lords of Destiny deal not only in world-shaking crises. They who mark the fall of a sparrow had recognized that Adam must have someone to cook his meals. Three years, with that mass of work to do! He could not well carry on alone.

THEY brought Eve into the vault and she took a seat across the underground waiting room from the Professor who merely glanced at her superciliously, his washed-out eyebrows arching as he overheard her razz the attendant:

"Sure, Mister, I'll set here. I ain't aimin' to heist none o' your damn swag!"

The moment had arrived.

Adam and Eve were not aware of any disturbance at first.

There was tremendous excitement above

Heading by BORIS DOLGOV

Herewith a record of that cataclysmic hour the future will recognize as Earth's last

BY BERT DAVID ROSS

ground as the wind suddenly increased and grew momentarily until it reached and passed hurricane velocity.

The radio carried one brief message, before radio towers all over the plant crashed. All programs were interrupted. I heard one such program where an excited voice cried:

"The sun has changed its course! I'm not crazy! We *all* see it! That can only mean—"

Another voice broke in: "Fly for safety underground! This isn't any make-believe! It's the real thing! The Earth is shifting on its axis due to overbalancing of the Polar Ice caps!"

Some stations might have succeeded in saying more. But the two persons for whom this message could have had value—Adam and Eve—were deep underground in a vault where there was no radio.

The third one of Earth's humanity who was saved may have heard the message. Carnozzi was his name. The reason for saving this creature from the cataclysm will be evident when I conclude.

The first intimation Adam received that something was wrong was when the heavy door opening on the spiral steel stairway clicked open. The official in charge had ordered the switch thrown in the upper control room and an emergency call sent to the tunnels for all workers to rush to the office.

As the door swung ajar, Adam stood up, expecting that the attendant was about to enter.

No one appeared. Above, there were heard the screams of terrified humans and the crash as the heavy building collapsed, but these sounds carried so faintly to the room where Adam and Eve were waiting that they mistook them for some radio program upstairs.

Then vibrations started a tremor in the walls and ceiling. Adam was puzzled. He sat down finally muttering: "Odd! Exceedingly odd, by Jove!"

Eve did not understand Cambridge English. But she gathered from the nettled expression on Adam's face what he meant.

She said: "Oh it's some shenanigan they are up to! Katie says to me—she's the one sent me here to see about a job—Katie says: 'Keep the glue off'n yer mits, Eve.' They'll hide a gold eagle where you'll swear it was drapp't. An' you'll think nobody's lookin'. But *don't you glom it!*"

When Adam did not answer Eve cocked her head, screwed up her face and winked at him: "This here noise an' shoutin' is just a trick. I'm tellin' yuh. . . . Yuh lookin' fer a job, Mister?"

Adam stared at her. He was thinking: "Lord! Has Shakespeare's English degenerated to this!" Finally he deigned to shake his head.

A half hour passed. Eve growing restless, leaned forward in her chair from time to time trying to peer up the spiral stairway.

THE roar of the unprecedented wind far above them had grown steadily until now it made a noise which penetrated the vast masses of concrete, steel and insulation until it was as loud above Adam and Eve as though an elevated train were passing directly overhead.

Adam grew impatient. He thought: "Four-thirty! I told the official that it is imperative I board that train which leaves at ten past six."

He was scheduled to preside at an important meeting of the Archeological Society on the following evening in Philadelphia. "If I were to miss that train it would be necessary to send a dispatch. And the officials do not wish it made public that I am here."

Eve's curiosity finally led her to go across to the stairway and peer upward.

"Go on up, woman, and see if you can find an attendant!" shouted Adam above the noise.

"The hell I will! You go if you're so damn anxious! I'm not runnin' any chance o' losin' this job!" Eve shouted back, her face showing red through the coarse powder.

Adam blinked. A mere menial! Addressing him, Dean of the College of Archeology, Curator of the Museum, and author of world-famous treatises, in this manner.

He rose. "Well, I can wait. . . . This is most discourteous of them!" He strode to the door and climbed the stairs.

At the next level, a second immense steel door stood ajar. Beyond it were more stairs. Near the top of this flight, Adam's face was stung by streams of air which carried grit. Faintly he detected the odor of smoke.

There was no light in this stairway as there had been in the one below. Adam climbed more slowly, his eyes growing accustomed to the semi-darkness.

Ahead of him he saw a narrow corridor whose walls showed dim reflections of daylight. Arriving there he saw a window at the far end of the corridor. He walked rapidly, not realizing that he was passing several doorways. The window was heavily barred and out of his reach.

The noise was deafening. The vibrations in the huge mass of cement were like those which a too-powerful engine sends through an antiquated ferryboat.

Adam could smell smoke more plainly now. He traced it to the crack of a door on one side of the corridor. Peering through the crack, he was blinded by grit.

He saw a desk and chair beside a peephole at an alcove in the wall. He recalled having passed this spot when he was admitted, and he knew that the main office was on the opposite side of this wall.

He hurried to the heavily glassed opening, intending to hammer on it and attract attention. He was becoming frightened; wild fancies of bombing by some enemy country pictured destruction luridly to his imagination.

He could not see far because of clouds of dust and rain and scurrying wisps of smoke racing before his eyes. But he saw enough!

He saw huge blocks of cement where the roof and one wall had fallen into the room. He saw parts of the buried bodies of two men and one girl. He felt certain that this ruin had been wrought by the hurricane and not by rocket planes or bombs.

Not since Adam's invalid mother had died peacefully when he was a fifteen-year-old lad had Adam permitted Death to touch his life. People about to die, in his well-ordered world, were speeded away in an ambulance to die in private. Those killed in accidents were hidden quickly under a cover by the police.

HE HAD not taken time to consider Death. And now it seemed inexcusable and ridiculous to him that these people had remained where a cumbersome building could topple upon them. He was alive! He would not have permitted such a fate to snare him!

"This is annoying! My long trip will be useless now. And it may be hours before a rescue party clears away all that debris and liberates me!"

TURNING from the window, he could see where fine sand was making tracings as it blew through cracks in the wall and across the floor. In one place a miniature dune had started already, reminding Adam of sand on the shore where he had spent a vacation years earlier in those days when he had been foolish enough to waste time on such things.

He presumed that the searchers would look for him in the underground waiting room and he turned through a doorway and descended stairs. He remembered Eve. He wondered whether she would be hysterical when he told her what had happened.

At the third level he came out upon a room which he had never seen. It was a vast workshop with an engine and whirling machines.

Adam knew nothing about machinery. He did not guess that this was the private electrical generator which had switched on automatically when the outside power failed.

Petulant at the delay, he retraced his steps to the corridor. He found that six doors opened upon it. He could not recall which one led to the underground waiting room.

The farthest door, which he tried next took him down three flights to a long tunnel-like room with a small electric train on a track and stall after stall along the walls piled solidly with yellow bricks.

Again he climbed back to the corridor. Another doorway led him down only one flight and opened upon a nicely furnished dining room with a kitchen.

He came at length to the door from which steps led to the waiting room.

"My Gawd! I'd give up hope o' ever seein' you agin'!" Eve shrieked above the tumult. "Whyn't them babies come? What're they stallin' fer? Say, what's all the racket?"

He told her. She scurried off to see for herself.

Six o'clock passed. Eight. Nine. Ten—

Still the terrific roar overhead continued. Adam shuddered when he realized the un-

believable velocity of the wind which could be heard thus far underground.

The vibrations of the floor and walls were continuous. Adam feared that the ceiling might collapse. He climbed the stairs once more to the corridor, thinking that nearer the surface there would be less danger.

But the vibration was even greater here. The uproar made by the thousand mile gale sweeping masses of debris over the surface of the earth was louder than an artillery practise Adam had once been forced to witness at close range.

He chose the stairs leading to the living quarters and climbed down. They were lit faintly from the light below.

HE DETECTED the odor of food as he neared the dining room. He found Eve, her elbows spread on the white table cloth; she was devouring an immense bowl of macaroni and Parmesan cheese. A six-cup percolator of coffee was already empty.

Adam asked: "Will you be so kind as to make me some coffee?"

"Make it yerself if you want some."

His eyelids blinked several times. This was a habit he had copied many years earlier from an honored president of one of the great universities. It had become reflex.

He was thirsty. Eve must have found water to make coffee—probably in the kitchen. He went out to the sink. It was half full of dirty pans and kettles.

He had not been aware that he was hungry until he had smelled the Parmesan cheese. Now he was ravenous.

He came back to Eve. "I'll give you a dollar if you will prepare me a serving of the macaroni au gratin, and two cups of coffee?" He held out the money.

For the first time, he really looked at Eve, her coarse skin pitted with large pores, her bulbous nose, her beady shifting eyes and the thin coarse hair which looked the same shade of red as that of some of the scrubwomen in his Club.

Eve pushed the bill into her pocket and swigged the last of her coffee, her fat legs relaxed and stretched lazily.

"You mean you want some o' that grub?" she translated from Cambridge English to Brooklynese. "Just as well be doin' that as nothin' Mister. . . . Say, what's yer handle?"

It took various ways of putting the question in her dialect before Adam understood.

Eve set the food and the coffee before him. She had found some jam and she sat opposite him, eating.

"You wash up," she said, when she finished. "I'm goin' to lie down 'til them guys git here."

Adam finished the meal, struggled to clean the dishes and Eve was snoring before he was through.

He searched vainly for another bedroom It was two o'clock before he ventured to tip-toe in and lie cautiously on top of the covers on the far side of Eve's bed.

HE WOKE to find Eve at the table, swigging coffee, her beady eyes hypnotized by one of the bricks of gold which was in front of her on the table.

She told Adam, talking so fast at times that he caught scarcely one intelligible word and she was obliged to repeat for him, that she had climbed to the corridor and pulled the table under the barred corridor window. She could see nothing for the clouds of sand.

She had discovered the stairs leading to the gold vault. She started back with a load of the bricks and had to leave part of them when she reached the second level. She went back for a second load.

She made coffee for Adam in a sort of daze, trying to estimate as she walked back and forth from the kitchen how many gold eagles one brick would make and how many bricks there were in each stall and how many thousands of dollars that amounted to.

Adam climbed to the corridor later and peered from the window.

A chill shook him as he looked out at the unbelievable sight. And for the first time a faint intimation dawned upon him of the seriousness of his situation.

The wind was vastly more terrible than any hurricane. And it had continued unabated for over twelve hours. He knew that any city in its path would be utterly destroyed. How wide was that path? How far had destruction spread already?

He was so shocked and sobered that when he returned to the living quarters and found Eve running the hot water full force he shouted angrily: "Here! Woman! Careful! That water—we'd be in quite a quandary

don't you know, if the mains broke, or if—"

"O.K., O.K.—easy on the water!"

Adam wondered where the supply of this water could be. And then he wondered about the lights and the power which supplied the stove. And the food! They might be imprisoned here another day; several days! It might be prudent to see what supplies were on hand.

During the day he and Eve explored. Deep in a tunnel they found a well which led to a large tank.

Eve showed him how wires from their stove and lights traced back to the engine room. "It's the engine what makes that thing there go 'round. That's what makes the juice. I seen one like it down to Maxie Coe's where my Jimmie woiks."

"What makes the engine go?" puzzled Adam.

"Gas."

"Gas? Where does the gas come from? Maybe it will become exhausted and the engine will stop and then—"

"We'll just have to git 'em to send more in."

Adam did not try to explain that they could not send around the corner for supplies. This primitive dependence upon the resources in hand was startling enough to himself.

Adam found a huge storeroom stacked high with cases of supplies—enough, it seemed, to last a year. He continued to wonder about the "gas" until, searching with Eve, they found another room in which hundreds of five gallon tins were stored.

Next they found where to pour the gas into the engine. Adam located a chart showing all of the services which the machinery required at definite periods—each day, each month.

They lived through the day. The roar of the wind overhead did not lessen.

Eve climbed to the corridor, descended to the vault and returned with more gold bricks. She made the trip three times, preparing food spasmodically whenever she felt hungry.

She exhausted herself finally and slumped on the bed. Adam had tried to persuade her that the gold was as safe in the vault as it was in their quarters. But she felt that each brick she carried was some tremendous achievement. And it was! I had given her the mental suggestion to carry these bricks here, for a definite reason.

Two more days passed. Anxiously Adam studied the charts in the engine room, struggling to identify the generator, the batteries, the pumps and gauges, the maze of oil cups and the intricate mass of tools and repair parts in the cupboards.

A WEEK passed. Eve had found a shovel and had cleared a path through the sand in the corridor. Adam had agreed with her that this sand might safely be shovelled into the stairway leading to the empty and useless waiting room.

He lay awake long hours at night trying to visualize what was happening to the world.

He felt convinced that after seven days of far greater hurricane velocity, the wind must have wrecked many thousand square miles of country.

Adam was forced to ask himself: "Why, when the hurricane ceases, should anyone hunt to rescue me when the destruction will be spread on every side?" There might be no one closer than New York who would even know that he was here.

And suppose New York itself had been in the path of the devastation! Adam could not imagine such a fate befalling the great and indestructible New York. Without New York, what would civilization be?

Even if an occasional family in the path of the hurricane had sought safety in cellars or tunnels, Adam wondered how many of them would be supplied with food and water?

More days passed. The second week. The third.

Eve had finally satisfied her greed for gold. Under their bed it was massed solidly; around the walls of the dining room it was piled three bricks high. She had been spellbound when Adam figured for her by cubic contents, specific gravity and price per ounce the value of one brick. She begged for the paper and pinned it inside her waist.

The sand in the corridor had gained on Eve's shovel. She had been forced to squirm over a high wall of it each time she made a trip to the vault.

Eve had become less greedy for food

after three weeks of glutting herself on canned meats and sea foods and fruit.

After many hours in which he struggled to make contact with her mind—the mind of the slum dweller who had never sensed the existence of worlds outside of her own—Adam gave Eve a sketchy idea of what was taking place outside and of their absolute dependence upon the machines in the tunnel, the well and the warehouse of canned foods.

By the end of the month he seemed to detect a lessening in the roar of the wind. And when forty days had passed, he was certain that the hurricane was gradually slackening.

It was about this time that he saw the sun from where he stood on the table under the corridor window. He had kept the sand shovelled away and he spent hours gazing out at the mad swirling clouds of dirt and debris. A sudden rift in the sky gave him a glimpse of the sun.

But not until he returned to the engine room, puzzled, and checked the diagram upon which north had been marked, was his mystification complete.

The sun was not where it should be!

He checked and re-checked. He found another diagram and strove to discover where he had made an error in calculation.

But the sun was still in the wrong direction.

And when next he saw the sun which this time was directly overhead he wondered if the storm could have tipped the building and whether he could have lost his own sense of balance. The sun could not be overhead. It was only overhead at the equator!

He had found a strong flashlight and he climbed the stairs each night searching the sky for stars. On the fifty-first night (though he had lost count of days and nights) he saw a star for one brief moment. A week later he saw the belt of Orion. He could not mistake it.

On the seventieth night he beheld the handle of the Big Dipper.

He stepped from the table, leaned over the sand and shone his light upon it and drew a diagram extending the handle of the Dipper and reconstructing the Pointers.

Yes. North was where the charts in the engine room had placed it. But the North Star! According to his reconstructed Dipper, the North Star would be far below the horizon!

Adam knew now how Galileo must have felt when he stared through his crude telescope and saw the crescent-shaped shadow of Venus and realized that the planet was a globe.

For Adam suddenly awoke to the certainty of what had happened. The Earth had turned over! The sun was directly overhead! He was no longer in the temperate zone—he was at the equator!

He knew that the terrific winds had been caused by the shifting of the earth within its enveloping atmospheric sheath and rocking backward and forward to a new equilibrium.

THIS was no local catastrophe. The entire earth had been swept by the same terrific forces!

What must have been the consequences to all lands and all the peoples of the world? Adam was overwhelmed by the vastness of this cataclysm which must have annihilated practically every living thing upon the earth's surface. The realization came so suddenly that he fell prostrate on the sand and lay there stupefied.

He made no attempt to convey to Eve the information about the shifting of the planet. As well expect her to understand how from analysis of a specimen of rock one might with certainty reconstruct its history as hope for Eve to comprehend this.

Each day he could detect the lessening in the velocity of the wind. And each day the corridor grew more and more unbearably hot as the sun shone through the clouds upon the ruins.

"How are we goin' to git out o' this joint?" Eve asked. "If nobody ain't comin' to put me to work I'm hittin' fer Brooklyn."

For days, Adam had been puzzling over this same question—how to escape this jail which had sheltered them. "I have a plan," he told Eve. "I am conducting an experiment."

Eve had long since wearied of struggling to understand his language. She had found it simpler to stand by and await developments.

His plan was simple. There was an acetylene torch and portable tanks in the tool

room. Adam could recall seeing men using these things. He had been experimenting with it. He knew nothing about it but his mind had been trained to solve problems.

Eve watched him produce a flame. He directed it upon a heavy piece of metal. Eve shouted a triumphant oath as the flame cut through the metal.

She slapped Adam on the back playfully and joked: "Here, leave me have it. I'll scorch some of them whiskers off'n yer mug!"

They carried the equipment up the stairs and set it in place near the steel door to the office.

"We must wait until the wind slackens," Adam told her. "Were we to cut a hole through the door now, the corridor would fill with sand."

They waited a week. Adam, looking from the corridor window day by day could see land, more and more land as the clouds thinned. But it was not any such land as he had ever beheld.

Every particle of soil and clay and sand had been torn loose and carried away. No root, no scrap of wood of any description was visible anywhere. Only this great building seemed to be left of all that had been on the earth. And Adam knew that it had been spared because its foundation had been poured in deep cavities drilled into solid rock.

One evening gazing from the window, Adam saw the heavens clear and full of stars. The moon shone on the glistening strata of rock which lay in rolling ridges and sloping shelves. Highly polished from the abrasion of sand and stones, they looked much like waves on a moonlit sea.

Even as he looked, the wind died. But a distant roar continued.

He was mystified, trying to reason out what could cause this roar which rose and fell rhythmically like the sound of the sea.

He felt certain that it could not be water. He was several hundred miles from the coast. He was baffled. But the problem dropped from his mind as he realized that now he could set about burning a passage through the huge door.

Before dawn he had made a hole three feet in diameter and had found a way between and under the great blocks of cement which lay piled like some prehistoric ruins in the place which had once been the main office.

Adam stood at last in the open air. The warm night breeze felt welcome for he was perspiring after the heat in the corridor. He was wearing his one pair of shorts and the shoes in which he had come from New York. His long hair and beard hung black against his bony white body.

The roar which he had heard was louder here.

Curious, Adam climbed the rock hill north of the building. He scanned the sky for clouds anxiously, for were the moon to desert him he would be lost; his path lay over faulted rolling rock ledges among which ran deep chasms. Near the crest of the hill he stopped amazed at what he beheld.

Less than half a mile away to the north, east and south, at the foot of long declines of jagged terraces formed by shelving strata of rock, rolled a mighty ocean, its huge waves pounding the rocky shores.

Adam knew now that the whole continental shelf of the Atlantic seaboard had sunk! New York! Philadelphia! Boston! They were gone!

He did not fall upon his knees at the miracle of this rock promontory upon which the building stood. He never questioned but that it was preordained that he should have been saved.

He sat a long time gazing at the vast expanse of water. What a sight it must have been, during the hurricane! Far out he noted a great glistening white spot which reflected the moon as though it were glass. It moved majestically, so slowly that at first he had thought it stationary. He guessed that it must be an iceberg, although he had never seen one before. An iceberg at the equator!

BEFORE the sun rose, Adam returned to the tunnels and woke Eve. Together they made a hurried breakfast. Adam carried a rock hammer, and strapped on a belt with a revolver and cartridges.

Eve pinned on her funny little hat with the bobbing poppy on its limber wire. This was an event!

They returned late in the afternoon, wearied from keeping their balance as

they walked over the marble-smooth uneven lay of rock.

A mile to the north they had discovered where a long inlet of the sea pierced the coast in a valley whose sides sloped so gently that they walked to the water's edge without difficulty.

"Addie! Addie!" Eve had cried. "There's a fish! Catch 'im!"

Adam could not overcome his abhorence of the pet name Eve had hung on him. Neither could he induce her to use the more dignified "Adam." She objected: "That was the guy in the Bible!"

However, the shock of realizing that there was something alive after all was of paramount concern to Adam at the moment. Of course! Protected in the depths of the ocean fish would still be alive and unharmed.

They returned to the inlet day after day with various sorts of fishing equipment which they rigged in the machine shop. And one day they caught a cod. Eve cooked it on the beach, Adam building her a fire with riff-raff of lumber which the tides had carried ashore.

As weeks passed, Adam noted that the water was gradually subsiding. Circling the inlet a strip of heavy muck grew wider and wider—silt from the ocean deposited on the rocky shores.

He reasoned that the melted ice and snow from the Polar regions had raised the Ocean level and now that freezing was once more taking place at the new poles the oceans would gradually subside.

Soil! Soil meant growth!

A few weeks after their first visit their eyes feasted on the welcome restful shimmer of green which fringed the inlet. Adam thought how in similar coves along the oceans all over the earth this same growth had probably started.

For at last he had accepted the reality of this amazing new existence into which he had been transplanted.

Everything which he had so long accepted as fore-ordained, cities, culture, protection, society's innumerable services, radio, theatre, books and periodicals, stores where one might purchase practically anything from pins to penicillin, bull-frog legs to bull-dozers, all this had vanished utterly.

Months rolled by.

There came to Adam overpoweringly the conviction that he and this unsavory scrub woman had been spared by some incomprehensible Fate to replenish the earth.

He shut from his mind the implications to which this thought led. And he strove in the long silent hours of night to realize what life would be like on this rock-bare planet in the ages which lay ahead, for possible descendants of his.

It dawned upon him that all knowledge of the past glories of man's achievements would die with him, die completely unless he found some way to pass this knowledge on.

Even were he to force himself to raise sons and daughters from this animalistic female (Eve had unhesitatingly sluffed off most of her clothes in the equatorial heat and she paraded unblushingly in a sloppy pair of cheap bloomers, her hair hanging unkempt as that of the original cave woman) these sons and daughters could not be trusted to remember merely from his narrating to them all the great facts of history and the sciences which Adam felt must be preserved, somehow, for future generations.

Eve unwittingly gave him a clue.

She was trying one night to tell him where she lived in Brooklyn. "I got to be gettin' home. Tim, he'll be wild, me not sendin' him any money."

Adam sat listening, silent, wondering whether he should try to tell Eve that Brooklyn was buried under the sea forever.

Lacking pencil and paper, Eve set one of the gold bricks on the table and scratched the diagram of the streets upon its smooth surface with the point of a paring knife.

ADAM forgot Brooklyn and its fate. The thousands of gold bricks! They would carry his message, permanently, indestructibly! Thousands of years might pass and still his words engraved on these surfaces would be as distinct as the hieroglyphics of Egypt.

A new purpose came into Adam's life. A great purpose. And in his walks with Eve to catch fish and to watch the growth of the hundreds of plants and the various grains and grasses on the shores of the inlet, there came a new spring in his step and an impatience with Eve's lackadaisical dallying and

lolling in the sun and her splashing in the warm water of the inlet. Finally he set a time limit to these trips and stalked back alone to the tunnels.

He worked out the history which he would write—the history of civilization. He evolved a tool, easy to hold, simple to keep sharpened, one which would make a fine clear but enduring etching in the gold. And he wrote first of all the amazing preface, which told of how he had been saved and how these bricks of gold had been made available for his use because his government had hoarded them.

TRAINING had made him ideally fitted for the task. He possessed a broad knowledge of the growth of civilization down the ages yet he lacked technical knowledge of any science except that of archeology.

He could write of war but not of the details of strategy or the weapons of war.

He could tell of science and medicine and architecture without being burdened by thousands of minor details; he could write of agriculture in the general way in which most men of his age could have told that grains and fruits, dairying and stock raising had been advanced through selection of breeds, until it was possible to provide all people of the earth in abundance.

Studying the plants of the margin of the inlet became of new interest to him now, for he hoped to sketch many of them and append the names by which they had been known.

Masses of debris were washing ashore now that the great ocean was growing more calm. Lumber of all descriptions was being piled high by the tides.

One day he and Eve found a potato! Another time they came upon a handful of wheat which had already sprouted in the warm silt where it had become embedded.

"Hey! I'll grow them things!" exulted Eve. "We'll have us fresh spuds. Gawd! What I'd pawn fer a onion! An' a bottle o' beer!"

They fashioned crude tools and cleared the higher margins of the soil about the inlet for Eve's garden. In time they found and planted beans and peas and tomato seeds which they had dried when a half-rotten tomato washed ashore. Each week witnessed some new discovery which was added to the garden.

This became Eve's delight. Indeed, for Adam also it was second in interest only to his great task, the writing of the "Golden History."

Eve sprouted another idea.

"Whyn't we slap some o' them boards together an' make us a shack so's we won't have to walk way back to the jail every day?"

"What about a bed?"

"We c'n find stuff, lots of it."

Fragments of carpets and canvas had washed in, true enough.

"And water?"

Eve pointed to a lake-like depression in the rocks where rain had gathered and settled, crystal clear. "I drunk it. Tastes fine."

So they set up this second residence. Nails from the machine shop or from driftwood, together with limitless boards of all sizes provided materials.

Next Eve wanted a raft so that she could fish farther from shore . . . a raft which Adam moored to a rock ledge with rope made by tying together short pieces which they salvaged.

Adam wished to date his Golden History. He struggled in vain to count back to the last day which he could identify on the old calendar.

There were so many days during the long period when the hurricane imprisoned them which had been a blank that finally he was obliged to resort to an estimate. He used the number of empty tins from which he had refilled the engine, multiplied by the days that one tin served.

After all, he reasoned, what did date mean on a calendar which no longer mattered? When for instance would New Year occur, at this new angle which the Earth had assumed?

IN THE months he had been observing it, the sun had shifted position slightly. That meant, of course, that the new axis was more or less inclined. There would be spring and fall in the temperate zones. But when? New Years Day might fall on Easter or Fourth of July. Meaningless words now!

More months passed. From his reconstructed calendar, Adam estimated that

in another week they would have been here a full year.

When he finally overcame his repugnance sufficiently to suggest to Eve that they go through the process of producing children in case no one else had been left alive on earth, she was indignant.

"None o' that, you! Not while Tim McCluskey's alive! He'd beat yuh to a pulp if he knew yuh got fresh with me!"

Adam liked her better after that.

She was like a child in her enthusiasm over her garden. One day she came running to him with a tiny new potato which she had found by digging under her plants. Her eyes and face were bright with a light Adam had never expected to see there.

Their days took on a pattern, Adam eating at sunrise and then walking to the cool room in the depth of the "jail" where he worked steadily until late afternoon, Eve playing in the garden or fishing on her raft or splashing in the warm salt water of the inlet.

They had divided the store of cooking utensils and dishes between the two residences. Each afternoon Adam carried supplies from the never-ending stock in the storeroom.

He seemed to feel an urge to complete his great task of writing the Golden History as soon as possible. He could not explain this. He knew that long years stretched ahead, long years which would provide a quarter-century before his faculties dimmed.

The Lords of Destiny had set the schedule for me, and it was I, of course, who urged him.

The second anniversary of the cataclysm found him far along in his task. He had covered the six faces of all the gold bricks which Eve had stored under the bed. He numbered each brick and re-piled them consecutively.

He wondered if Eve still thought Tim McCluskey was alive. But he decided not to bring up the matter again for a while.

The third anniversary found him with only a few bricks left out of those Eve had piled around the walls.

The marvelous machinery in the engine room had operated without a hitch. Adam tried not to think what he would do if something failed and the lights went out.

The garden was supplying more and more of their necessary food by this time. Four times they had harvested wheat and sown a larger patch. Next planting—they need not wait a year in this climate—they planned a field of wheat a hundred feet square.

Eve had learned how to shoot large fish which though useless for food yielded fat which supplied her with cooking oil. In spite of the rich food, she was growing shapely and muscular. Adam decided that when he had finished the History he would have to set his mind to that other problem.

Adam, in his work on the Golden History, discovered that his unprecedented experience had brought about a change of values. His history was far different from one which he would have written some years earlier.

For instance, in tracing the rise and fall of nations, he described as semi-barbaric the rulers of those European countries which had fought so long and savagely to protect their puny customs and traditions and hates.

He told how immigrants from these same countries had come to America, intermarried and lived happily, their descendants working and fighting side by side to promote peace.

Adam dismissed the story of motion pictures as of too slight consequence to deserve mention. But he regretted that he could not give the technical information by which future generations might reconstruct the marvel of radio and radar.

He could not tell what made a steam engine or an automobile go, nor how electricity was made, but he tried to describe each.

He tried to give the names of the great ones, down the ages, but Caesar and Alexander and Napoleon no longer seemed great or even worthy of mention.

AND he found that there was little which he could pass on concerning painting or sculpture or music or drama except a few technical points and a few names. He strove to describe a symphony orchestra and he planned, if space permitted, to sketch various musical instruments, and a few great works of architecture.

He strove to recall some poem which he could transcribe. But the few which came

to his mind seemed inane. Most of them seemed to derive their effect from some play upon words which Adam realized would be meaningless to one for whom the English language would be as dead as Syriac or Sanskrit was for him.

But he was struck with a memory which came to him as he lay one night beside Eve's moist clean-smelling body, listening to the rhythmic breathing of the queer primitive creature.

He remembered something which his own invalid mother had loved—loved so much that even during her lifetime she had asked her husband to have it engraved for her on a bronze tablet.

And when his mother died, Adam, then an impressionable boy of fifteen who had adored her, placed the bronze tablet on her tombstone.

He had heard her repeat the words so often, her soft rich voice giving them a strange power and beauty, that they had burned themselves into his consciousness.

FOR years he had utterly forgotten them. But now, in his search for some sublime expression of this tongue which would soon be lost forever, they came clearly to him. next day he wrote down on the golden tablet:

> I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems, and all I see, multiplied as high as I can cipher, edge but the rim of the farther systems.
>
> Wider and wider they spread, expanding always expanding,
>
> Outward and outward and forever outward.
>
> My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels.
>
> He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit and greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them.
>
> There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage.
>
> If I, you and the worlds and all beneath or upon their surfaces were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would not avail in the long run;
>
> We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
>
> And as surely go as much farther—and then farther and farther.

Adam had accomplished the work for which he had been saved. It was necessary now that I prevent the spawning of a new race from the professor and the scrub woman.

The time had come for me to complete my work on earth and return to Venus.

The Lords of Destiny had prepared a magnificent sacrifice for Adam, to repay him for his labors. A sacrifice which would lift him above mass-humanity and provide an invaluable impetus in the evolution of his shell-bound ego.

It was with this in mind that They had saved Carnozzi.

THIS last morning Adam had left Eve happy in her garden, which now boasted wide borders of flowers. Eve's cheap bloomers had disintegrated and she had now tied a piece of salvaged canvas about her.

Adam was walking, his eyes on the trail, planning what he would write on the one brick which was still blank.

Eve had asked some weeks earlier: "Whyn't yuh dig into them stairs 'n' go down where the gold's stacked in them bins? Hell, I didn't half empty the first bin even."

But upon following her advice and digging along the corridor to the proper door, Adam found that sand had blocked the way. The stairwell was filled solidly with drifted sand.

He knew that each of the doors at the various levels down those stairs had been left open. That meant that the whole vertical distance (a hundred feet, Adam calculated) was packed solidly with sand.

He could write about it in his Golden History, telling where to find this vast store of gold, but he could never dig down to the vault.

This morning he was barefooted, his shoes having gone to pieces months ago. His feet had grown tough and the feel of the cool shelves of rock under them gave Adam a strange pleasure.

As he mounted the hill and looked ahead, he fancied that he must be suffering from hallucination. He imagined that he saw a man at the ruined building. He blinked.

It *was* a man! A powerful black-haired giant whose mahogany-colored body was bare even of a breechcloth!

And Adam saw, in the creature's hands, two gold bricks!

His first impulse was to turn and run back to the Hoover-town Hut for the revolver. He had not worn it for months. Eve used it occasionally to shoot fish. There had been no need of it for protection.

Then Adam thought: "He may follow me. And he isn't dressed!"

The stranger had started up the trail toward Adam. He, too, was barefooted. Evidently he had been without shoes for a long time; he jumped from ledge to ledge catlike.

Adam waited. The creature, as he came near, grinned. A gold tooth showed. He spoke:

"Well, well! A man!" His voice was gruff and Adam wondered how long it had been since the man had last used it. His tone was bantering. Adam had the feeling that the stranger had always addressed inferiors, or men accustomed to his greater power or position.

"Where did you come from?" asked Adam.

"I was down to your place. I thought I was the only man alive. Here I find you with electric lights and running water. Pretty classy. I can use some of that."

Adam tried to remember whether there had been anything of Eve's in the tunnel. . . There were two pillows on the bed. . He inquired, to make conversation: "How did you escape? Where have you been? Are you alone? He knew that he was not sounding cordial. This was not the way he had pictured meeting one who might have been fortunate enough to escape.

"I'm alone. We had food enough stored in the place for two months. Then I starved. The wind died. I lived on fish. Fish! Say, I cooked myself a meal back there in your tunnel. And coffee!"

He set the gold bricks down and walked up to Adam grinning and held out his hand. "My name's Carnozzi. What's yours?"

Adam told him.

"You must have a dame somewhere—you wear clothes."

Adam glanced down at the thin breechcloth. He knew that it was useless to pretend he was alone. This person would find Eve before the day ended.

He did not like Carnozzi. He wondered whether Carnozzi's resemblance to gangsters he had seen in the movies was the reason for this dislike or whether it were the fellow's brazenness in making no effort to cover his body, or if it were the giant strength of the man and the condescending way Carnozzi grinned as he looked down at him.

"That gold," said Adam, "I and my—my wife have been writing a history of mankind on it. It is of no use to anyone as money—not now. But it will carry my words to future generations."

The big fellow shook his mass of black hair and laughed. "That's right—it isn't any use, for money! There's no place to spend it!"

He laughed as though this were a joke. Then he swung and picked up the two bricks. "But it's gold! GOLD! That's enough! Just to lift that much gold, in one chunk—it makes you feel—"

Then he came back abruptly to his principal interest. "Say, where is this dame of yours? I want to see her. I haven't set eyes on a woman—"

Adam, in the old days, might not have understood the expression in Carnozzi's eyes. In Adam's world lust was something gross, something which no gentleman permitted to show in his eyes. But Adam understood it now, in Carnozzi.

He said: "Come." He turned and started back. He was thinking fast. He foresaw the inevitable consequence of this savage meeting Eve!

He felt cold, realizing that Carnozzi would kill—kill with no more question of right and wrong than he had felt when he helped himself to food there in the tunnel and to the gold which he had appropriated as though the only title to gold was the possession of it.

HE FORESAW that Carnozzi would strangle him or beat out his brains or throw him over a cliff. And future generations who would inherit the earth—those millions for whom he had written the Golden History—would be born of a scrub woman and a beast!

He must protect Eve! Even at the risk of his own life, he must rid the earth of this menace!

Adam turned abruptly toward the sea. "This is a steep path. Watch your step!" he called over his shoulder.

"Hey! What's the idea? Where you takin' me? Your trail leads straight ahead."

"Oh, that's where we go to fish. You don't want fish, do you?" Adam heard Carnozzi's oaths and over his shoulder he saw his victim following him.

"My woman's down here, in a cave," Adam lied. "We like to—well, we like to have a little private room."

The suggestive laugh which greeted this made Adam feel as smirched as though he had been telling a smutty story.

He had come to this place one day months before, when he had felt adventurous. The mere memory of the experience had been a nightmare.

Carnozzi called down: "Hell, your dame must be half cat!"

Adam clung to the rocks, waiting. "You'll like her," was all his tense and terrified body could say. The sight of the rocks far below, the awfulness of the moment which had arrived, almost unnerved him. This might be worse than mere murder! It might easily be suicide! And then there would never be a future race of mankind!

He forced his fingers into a cross-crevice, holding tightly.

Carnozzi came step by step down the trail.

Adam reached up, gripped the man's leg and pushed.

Carnozzi screamed an oath. He had lost his balance. He slid down and out.

His heavy body hit Adam's legs, but Adam clung to the rock and would have been safe except that Carnozzi's flailing arms found one of Adam's legs and his hand caught Adam's ankle. They fell together.

"And Eve?" one of my listeners asked.

"Eve will live out her appointed time. She is quite happy in her little garden."

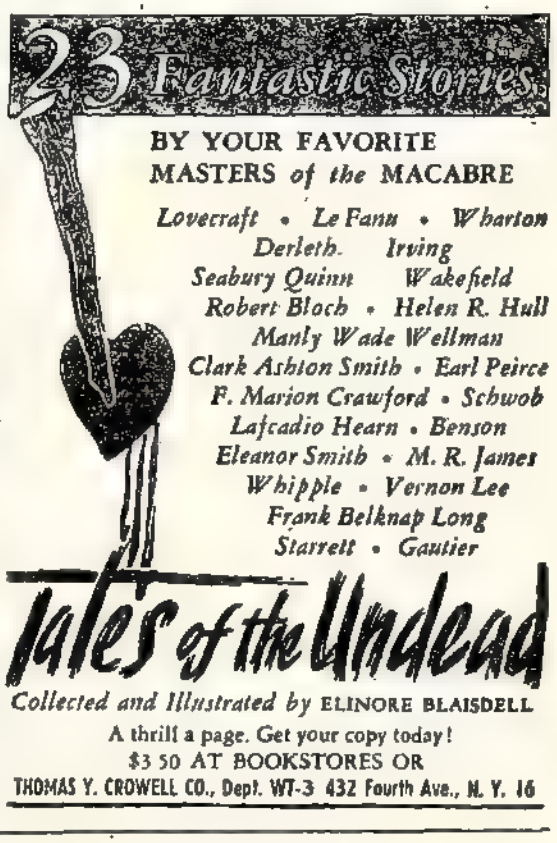
"Eve and her 'Garden of Eden!'" remarked someone, laughingly.

"Such was the plan of Neptune's Lords of Destiny," I summed up, for my listeners. "Future humanity must evolve from the sea, as it did before. To have saved seed from the present race would have been futile. Better an entire new start than to rebuild from seed so rotten that all its best thinkers merely contributed to forces which mass humanity converted to purposes of destruction."

"You did not tell us how Carnozzi escaped the cataclysm."

"Carnozzi was one of a group of international gangsters who had built a vast underground hiding place in the mountains of Kentucky and were stocking it with all the materials necessary for a sudden, well-planned attack which would have given them complete mastery of the United States and then of the entire world."

I concluded: "Adam was ignorant of this. But he sensed Carnozzi's evil nature. Adam was willing to die rather than to have future generations spring from him. That was his noble sacrifice."



The Lens

BY MARY ELIZABETH COUNSELMAN

GOOD morning? Did . . . did somebody knock?

Oh—! Oh, my *goodness! Visitors,* at this time of the morning? I bet I just look *awful!* But Mom *would* go to the beauty parlor for her facial, and *somebody* had to be here to tell the moving-men what to *move* and everything. . . . I just put on

Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

What one sees through a telescope depends on the person—and the lens!

this old brunch-coat and left my hair done up in bobbies. Dad dropped me off here on his way to the office. If I'd *dreamed* anybody was coming to look at Uncle's *house,* though. . . !

Oh . . . you're *not* here to look at the house? Then, what. . . . ? You're from . . . *where?* Yerkes *Observatory?* And . . . and *Harvard* Observatory? And Mount . . . Oh! That's where they're setting up that big 200-inch telescope, isn't it? Buddy and Uncle Caleb were always raving about it. I mean, you'd think it was something *important,* like penicillin or atomic power. . . . Oh, *I'm* sorry. I didn't mean to throw *off* on your . . .

Gee, I bet you think I'm the *rudest* girl you ever met! Please come in, won't you? If you'll pardon these dark glasses. I can't *see* you, so I don't know how many of you there are. No, I'm not *blind* or anything. It's just that I've been looking through that droopy old *lens* Uncle Caleb invented. The way it affects you—well, you can't see things that are in front of you *now;* only objects and people that were here an *hour ago.* Please don't think I'm *nuts!* That really is the way it affects. . . .

Oh—Uncle Caleb? You came to see *him?* But I thought you *knew.* The funeral was four days ago. . . . Thank you. . . . Thank you; we do miss him terribly, he was such a sweet old goof. So absent-minded, sort of, and so wrapped up in his hobby. That's all he ever talked about: astronomy. . . .

To tell you the truth, we've been just about *crazy* these last few days, with the funeral, and worrying about Buddy, and trying to store Uncle's furniture and stuff so Dad can sell the house. . . .

Mr. Hubbard? You mean Dad? He's down at the office—Hubbard & Darcy Real Estate, on Sixth. . . . Mr. *Jonathan* Hubbard? Why, that's *Buddy!* My little brother. He's only twelve; what would you want to see *him* about? Besides, he's in the hospital. . . .

Oh-h! What? Air-mail special delivery. . . . ?

You mean, you came all this way, from all over the country, just in answer to a letter *Buddy* wrote you? Oh, I know you're *furious!* Mom will certainly give *him* what-for! When he gets *well* enough for a spanking, I mean, of course. He's awfully sick now, poor little jerk. The doctor says it was nervous shock. You see, Buddy was *with* Uncle Caleb when he had that heart attack and fell off the ladder. . The step-ladder, you know; the one he uses with his telescope. They were up on the roof, looking at the stars, as usual. Uncle Caleb had four telescopes. Made 'em himself. . . .

Beg pardon?

Oh, the *lens!* So that's what Buddy wrote you about! That crazy lens. Honest, I wish I'd never *seen* the darn thing; it's just *ruined* my eyes. Buddy and Uncle Caleb kept talking and talking about it, all sorts of goofy things. Like how you could see a candleflame through it at such-a-number of light-years—I forget how many—when the largest 'scope in use now can only see one at 1,700 miles away. . . .

What did you say? I can't understand you, all talking at once. . . .

Oh, Buddy thought Uncle Caleb was some kind of a Thomas *Edison!* Of course, the rest of the family *understood* him. He was really just a sweet harmless old goof. I mean, well, as Mom says, he never *bothered* anybody with his star-gazing. Grandpa left this old home to Mom and Uncle Caleb jointly; but it was *silly* of him to live on here, rattling around in it all by *himself* instead of selling it and living with *us.* Honest, it drove Dad almost *frantic.* Because Unk was so impractical, I mean. You *would* think, though, that he'd have some consideration for Buddy and me, and let Dad sell it during this real estate boom. But Uncle Caleb was so *wedded* to that old observatory he'd built on the roof, he just kept putting Dad off. . . .

"Harvey," he'd say "I'm working on something that will bring a fortune for me to leave the children. If you and Martha will only have a little more patience. . . ." Then he'd say, kind of shy but excited and proud: "There are only two known ways of gathering light: reflection and refraction, Harvey. But I've discovered a third way by combining the two!"

POOR old dear. He really thought he was a genius or something, though Dad was always having to pay for his groceries and utilities. Uncle worked at the American

Optical Co. until about a year ago, and at least he made enough to live on then. But he just quit all of a sudden, he got so interested in this crazy lens he was making for his second-largest telescope. . . . That's the twelve-inch reflactor—re*fract*or, I mean! Or is it reflector? I've watched Uncle and Buddy fooling around with him, grinding mirrors and things like that, but I never can remember which kind is which. Except that, with one kind, you have to lie down on the roof, almost, to look through it from the end. And the other one, you look in from the side and have to climb up on a step-ladder. . . .

Oh! My goodness, here I am just *standing* here, chattering away. Sit down, all of you; won't you?

There *is* a davenport over there; isn't it? I mean, I can *see* it. Just a little bit wavery, like when you look at something through a glass of water. I can even see that cigarette burn on the arm, that I made when I was sneaking one downstairs, the night Uncle and Bud discovered where Halley's Comet goes. . . . Pardon? I thought somebody sort of *yelped*. . . . I mean, Mom doesn't want me to *smoke* until I'm eighteen; but I sneak one over here at Uncle Caleb's because he never notices *anything* but what's going on over on Venus or Mercury. . . .

Aren't there even any *chairs* in this room? Oh, I'm *sorry;* guess we'll just have to *stand*. The moving-men must have hauled them off that last trip. I've had the *worst* time telling them what to take next, when I can *still see* the stuff they're already hauled to the warehouse! It gives you the goofiest feeling honest! Uncle explained it to me—how the light waves sort of *slow up* when they filter through his old lens. And if you look through it a long time—way I did the other night, like a guppy!—it does something to the lens of your eyes, or the retina, or something. Like that kid in the papers who had upside-down sight; remember the case? For a week or so, Uncle said, it makes the light-images reach your retina about fifty-three minutes slower than normal light is supposed to travel. . . .

"Amazing"? You can say *that* again! Honest, it *sounds* like something Uncle and Buddy would cook up! They were always gabbing about the speed of light from some old *nebulae,* like that cute little smoke-ring in . . . Lyra? Is that the right constellation? I never can remember, but I've seen it through Unk's refractor. . . . Honest, the time I *waste* looking through those *scopes!* But you *can't* have a date *every* night, like I told Mom—though you can bet I don't pop off to *Ferdy* about all this astronomy stuff. I mean, gosh, why, he'd think I was some kind of a *drizzly droop* or *something! I* mean, girls who go around talking about variable stars and cosmic dust and stuff . . well, they sound sort of *horn-rimmy* to *boys*. . . . It's something to do, just to kill time, though. I once said that to Unk, and he laughed and said: "You can't kill time, my dear—it's always there, behind and ahead of you. You can't even measure it, because time is relative. Remember, when you look up at a star, it's always yesterday in space." That's the kind of thing Unk was always saying; I mean, can't you *see* what a goof-ball he was? But he was a darling. Buddy and I both just adored him. There wasn't anything he wouldn't do for

Oh-h! I'm beginning to *see* you gentlemen a little! It's all blurry and mixed up, like looking at a snapshot film. Everything that's white is dark, and everything dark is white. You all seem to have on white coats, with black skin. And your eyes look so *weird!* The iris is pale, and the eyeball is dark! Like when you look at something for a minute and then stare at a blank wall, you'll see the light-image reproduced, only it's the opposite color. Buddy told me once why that's . . .

Oo-ooh! My *head!* Uncle Caleb *said* your head always aches horribly when your eyes adjust back to normal light-speed—whatever *that* means! . . Oh, *darn!* They're changing back again. I can still see the davenport and packing cases, though I know very well the moving-men stacked them in the warehouse, half an hour ago! And I can't see you gentlemen at *all* now, not even a shadow. If it wasn't for your voices, I wouldn't even know you were here! Isn't it a scream? Like being lost in the mirror-house at a circus, or something! If you left right now, I'd be able to see you an *hour* from now, just as though you were still here! Honest, it's kind of fun, but it drives me *nuts!* Like listening to a movie when

the sound-track runs two or three minutes ahead of the film. You see the heroine and she says in a deep bass voice: "I'll save you, little girl!" I can't help laughing sometimes, watching Dad talk but hearing Mom's voice. . . .

Pardon?

"Uncle Caleb's records"? "Notes on his work"? Why, I don't think he ever wrote anything down about all that stuff he was doing. . . . Oh, yes. There *was* a notebook. Mom burned all that junk, though; star-maps, and old copies of "The Sky," and letters. Uncle Caleb corresponded with a dozen other amateur astronomers all over the world. Would you believe it, he used to write to some old *Jap* in Yokohama and a crippled German boy in Hamburg! Honest, the way they ignored the *war*, you'd think it was just some *dogs* fighting in the yard! They wrote once a month till the letters wouldn't go through the censors. Then after V-J Day, they just started up again without a word about their countries hating each other, except they were glad it was over and they hoped Mount Palomar could go on with the 200-inch mirror now! Can you *beat* it? I mean that'll give you a good cross-section of Uncle Caleb, the way he was. . .

WHY, no. I don't remember the names of his pen-pals. Just some old Jap, and a German boy. And there was one in France, and another in England. And, oh, yes, one in Africa, too. I remember he sent Uncle a picture of the Southern Cross, and Unk sent him one of Cygnus. Then they swapped photos of themselves standing by their telescopes, and do you know, the man was a *Negro!* Dad was so shocked—he's from Georgia, see? But Uncle Caleb just smiled and said the people on Mars were probably *green* or *purple*, but he wished he could strike up a friendship with one of *them!* . . . Yes, I guess he wrote them *something* about his lens. Not much. Just a word here and there, like about those nasty little lobster-things on the moon. Unk said *they're* what make those *craters*, not meteors or heat-bubbles like astronomers think caused them. He says they've always wondered, but now he has *seen* them through his telescope.

Oh, is that *good?* I mean, seeing the moon up close? I remember Unk saying our largest scope brings us within 25 miles of the moon, but his lens brings us within three feet. . . . Is that anything special? . . . He said if we could send some people to the moon on a rocket and they landed, you could recognize their faces through a telescope with his lens. But that's just *silly!* How could anybody get on the *moon?* Why, it sounds like the *comic books* or something!

"Blueprints"? No-o, I don't think Uncle made any blueprints of his lens. Maybe just a sketch or some figures, on the wall or on an old laundry-slip. I threw all the stuff away, twice a week when I'd come to clean up for him. Sometimes he'd fuss at me for losing stuff, but then he'd smile and hug me, and say: "I couldn't expect you to understand, dear. After all, they *imprisoned* Galileo. . ." He was always talking like that. No; Mom burned all his junk when we were cleaning up after the funeral. All but the telescopes, of course, and the spectograph, and that old Schmidt camera Uncle bought in Chattanooga at auction. When Buddy gets well, he'll want all *that* stuff. Mom says every boy should have a hobby, and if Buddy wants to mope around gazing at stars, why, that's just as good as collecting stamps or building midget racing-cars, like Danny Mitchell next door to us. Honest, the things that boy knows about astronomy, just from batting the breeze with Uncle Caleb! I mean, well, what twelve-year-old boy would know there aren't any canals on Mars, the way most people think, because the life on *that* planet is very primitive, and it's just the ice caps melting at the poles and running down in rivers. . . .

Beg pardon? Why, I guess he saw it through Unk's lens. They were always gabbing about *something* wacky they saw. . . . Yacky-tee, yack! Every time Uncle Caleb and Buddy would come to the dinner table —Unk had Sunday and Wednesday dinner with us—you couldn't get a word in edgewise! Of course, Mom and Dad would just *laugh*. I mean, it was all too *crazy* to have any *sense* in it. Sometimes they'd be too excited to *eat*, even, and then Mom would get real peeved. During the week Mom used to send plates over to the house for Uncle Caleb. He wouldn't eat a thing if she didn't.

Just maybe open a can of soup or something, he was so wound up in his silly old astronomy. I mean, you'd think he was doing some important *research,* not just looking at something way up in the *sky*. .

Ooh! My eyes are acting up again. And my *head*. . . ! Honest, it didn't feel *this* bad the time Gary Wilson spiked the punch at our Junior prom! Everything's spinning around. . .

Whew! Thanks; I think I'm all right now. But I still see all that furniture that isn't here. Isn't it fantastic? Just like one of those Buck Rogers serials Buddy goes to see every Saturday at the Bijou. How do they think up all those crazy things—rockets zooming around, I mean, and people disintegrating, and talking through wrist-radios! Kids like Buddy just *dote* on 'em; but they bore me to tears. Give me Tyrone Power and Gene Tierney *any* old time. . .

Ooo-h! That darn *lens!* I don't know why I ever let Uncle and Buddy talk me into looking through it so long the other night! All that stuff about space bending, and other galaxies like ours that revolves around the sun. Who *cares* about some old sad-sack of an exploding star sending out an electronic bombardment, the way Unk said. Every time Mom and I would catch a cold or fly off the handle at somebody, Uncle Caleb used to say: "Cosmic rays! It's childish for our scientists to try and control cancer and other cell-destructive diseases until we do something about those cosmic rays battering away at us. Like millions of tiny little bombs from out of space. . . ."

What's that? Oh, *Dad* used to ask him that, too. "Caleb," he'd say, "why don't you write the authorities about all these marvelous discoveries of yours? The world is panting to know about them, man! You're holding up progress!" Dad's such a tease. But Mom would kick him under the table, because Uncle Caleb was so quick to get his feelings hurt.

"They wouldn't believe me, Harvey," he answered once, sort of sad but eager at the same time. "They wouldn't believe a simple report. But the lens! I can prove it all with my lens. It must be perfect, though, before I show it to them. No defects. Scientists are very skeptical, very quick to seize on anything that will disprove a new truth. I must work on it a little longer, just a little longer. . ."

Then he and Buddy would dash back to the observatory on the roof, just like the two kids. Honest, Buddy just *worshipped* Uncle Caleb. The doctor says it's no wonder it shocked him so when Unk dropped dead like that, and fell off the ladder. Only, *I* don't think that's what's the matter with Buddy at all, just shock over Unk dropping dead, I mean. .

Pardon? Why, just last Tuesday. Poor Uncle Caleb! He and my brother were all excited that night about something new they thought they'd found in the sky. Just a week ago. My, so much had happened in these few days, it all seems like a bad dream.

OH, YES. *I* was here, too. But I didn't see it happen. That is, I was *looking* at Uncle; but my eyes Well, that night was when I got my first peek through that crazy *lens,* and got my eyes all snafu this way. Even if we weren't not going out on account of Uncle Caleb, I couldn't go to the club dance tomorrow night. I just know Ferdy won't *ever* ask me again, because the other night I said I *couldn't see* him at all. Gosh, I bet *he* thought I meant . . ! Now that little drip of a Jane Harris will move right *in,* I guess! . . .

What? Oh! That night. Well . . . I came over to bring Uncle his supper, ham hock and string beans, he loved the way Mom cooks 'em. Buddy came with me. We called and knocked, but Uncle Caleb yelled down at us from the roof, and said come on up quick. Seems he'd run across something terrible, and he sounded all upset. Bud and I got in through the kitchen, and climbed up to the observatory. Uncle was up on his step-ladder, looking through the twelve-inch reflactor—*refractor?* The one with the mirror; you know. Only he'd taken out the mirror, and put in his lens where . . .

The lens? Oh, a kind of funnel-shaped glass thing, like a big rhinestone. Uncle ground all the parts himself, and sent the mirrors off somewhere to be aluminized—you know, that silver stuff put on them. The lens is really just a lot of *small* lenses and mirrors cemented together, like a honeycomb inside. Light goes in at the big end

and sort of spirals around inside the thing until it comes out the other end, through an ordinary eyepiece to your eye. One little mirror kicks it through one lens, then another mirror catches it and kicks it through another. . . . At least that's the way Buddy *told* me it worked. He said the light-waves kind of hang up in there, some way, though, and reach your eye about an hour slower than light goes through an ordinary telescope. . . .

Oh, no. Uncle Caleb said that doesn't affect the *accuracy* at all. You just have to allow for the extra time, when you're checking the orbit of a planet or the revolution of the sun, or something. Anyhow, he said 53 minutes don't count much, when the light from a star takes thousands of years to reach the earth. . . .

One thing I remember Uncle saying: that a star we wish on—you know; "Starlight, star bright, first star I see tonight"—may not *be* in the sky at *all* now. Maybe it burnt out *ages* ago, and what we see is only the light-image of it, sent out to us through space when it *was* there. Honest, that sounds just plain *wacky* to me! Privately, I always thought poor Uncle Caleb had a screw loose somewhere. Though I must say he was perfectly sensible about *important* things.

Like that time he sold the cheval glass out of the downstairs hall, so I could have a new dress and shoes for the Senior banquet. He was such a *sweet* old duck, we didn't mind *humoring* him about his old *astronomy*. . . .

Like last Tuesday night, for instance. He was all in a dither and I kept *warning* him about his *heart*, the way Mom always has. But he sort of looked at me and laughed and mopped his forehead where it was getting bald and said: "Relativity again, my dear. Compared to what I know tonight, my heart murmur seems quite insignificant!" So I just didn't try to argue with him.

"Jonathan!" he pulled Buddy over to the telescope—Uncle Caleb always called Buddy Jonathan; it flattered the little jerk to *pieces*, because it made him sound grown-up. "Jonathan," he said. "It's that little asteroid that seems to have jumped its orbit. *It's breaking up!* I think it must be caught between the gravity pull of the earth and Jupiter, Mars being out of range at the opposite side of the sun. . . ."

I said, what in pete's name is an *asteroid*, and Buddy said, hophead, it's a little bitty planet or a hunk of a big planet. Well, I didn't *know*. I mean, all I know about astronomy is just what I've heard them *say*. . . .

Then they started taking turns looking through the lens and talking, all excited, like it was a *horse-race* or something. Honest, the way those two used to go on about some old thing they saw in the *sky!*

"What's going to happen?" Buddy kept saying. "What's it going to do?"

"I don't know, son," Uncle Caleb would say, and keep shaking his head like it was just too *awful* for *words*. "I wouldn't hazard a guess," he said. "Fragments of it are flying off all the time, in meteors. They're too small yet to affect us. Our atmosphere is burning them up, but the moon is catching plenty. . . ."

"What if it broke up and all the pieces fell toward us?" Buddy asked.

"In that case," Uncle said, "we'd either be pelted to death with small meteors, or they'd take an orbit of their own around our planet as satellites, like the moon. We'd have rings around the earth like Saturn."

"And what would that do?" Buddy kept at him, sounded worried—honest, he was right funny!

"Blot out the sunlight from us in a wide band," Uncle said, like he was talking about filling a *fountain pen* or something! "Geologists think that may have been the cause of the Ice Age, you know—a small moon breaking up and blotting out the sunlight from us. It could happen again, if that little asteroid happens to be pulled harder by the earth's attraction than by Jupiter. Of course, Jupiter is much the larger planet, but we're helped by the sun's pull. It's passed the orbit of Mars, and almost reached the orbit of our moon around us. . . ."

I said, how close is that? And Buddy said, dumb bunny, *everybody* knows the moon is only 239,000 miles away from the earth. Then they sort of *ignored* me, the way they always have when I ask questions they think are silly.

Buddy said, "Do you think anybody else has observed it? Without the lens?"

AND Uncle Caleb said, "Very unlikely. It's moving too fast for an ordinary scope to pick up—some heavenly body must have struck it and knocked it off its orbit. And then, too, it's not only non-luminous but it seems to be composed of some dull metal that doesn't reflect sunlight—unlike the two moons of Mars, say, or our moon. . . ."

Then Buddy said, "Oughtn't we to notify Yerkes or Mt. Wilson? Isn't there *anything* we can do to . . . to . . ?"

"To save our unsuspecting planet?" Uncle Caleb just smiled at him, sort of sad and gentle, and patted Buddy's head. "No, son. Scientists can only observe and report on nature. We can't change it—not anything as big as this. Perhaps it's best that nobody knows it's coming, except us two."

Then Buddy gave sort of a gulp, and began to cry! Honest, it just bowled me *over!* I mean, I haven't seen the little jerk *cry* since Butch, that's our bulldog, got run over. Uncle Caleb put his arm around his shoulders, and they stood there for a while, looking up at the sky together.

"No tears, Jonathan," he kept saying, and patting Buddy till he stopped crying after a while. "Scientists don't cry; not when there's work to be done. . . . My dear, would you be kind enough to make us some coffee? We'll be up all night."

But I was on the step-ladder by then, looking through Uncle's lens. I mean, hearing them pop off like that, I was kind of *curious.* But there wasn't anything to *see,* just this little dark blob in the sky, silhouetted against the stars. Now and then it would shoot off a few sparks; Uncle said that was the atom fission caused by the two planets pulling it in opposite directions. Honest, I couldn't see anything to get *excited* about, so I just climbed down off the ladder and said phooey! I started for the trapdoor, and bumped headlong into Buddy! You know, I could see him just as plain as day, standing beside Uncle Caleb. It scared me, but then he and Uncle laughed and told me how the lens affects your vision. .

After a while I groped my way downstairs without much trouble—I mean, I can get around here in Unk's house with my eyes *shut,* so that's what I *did.* But, honest, it was just *weird* being downstairs in the hall and yet seeing the *upstairs* hall, sort of wavery but clear enough. I made the coffee by touch, then got a chicken leg out of the icebox and went out in the hall to phone Mom. I told her Uncle Caleb and Buddy were all hepped up about some old dingus in the sky, and she said:

"Tell Caleb to stop filling that child's head with his fairy tales! And tell Buddy to come right on home. He hasn't memorized *half* of his debate on whether we should keep the atom secret. Doesn't Caleb want him ever to get out of the seventh grade?"

So I fumbled my way back up to the roof with the coffee, to tell them what Mom said. When I poked my head up through the trap door, I couldn't *see* them, of course. By then my eyes were seeing the kitchen stove with the coffee boiling on it, although it was in my hand now. . . . Isn't that *crazy?* But I could hear Buddy talking, over by the Schmidt camera, and I could hear Uncle Caleb's voice from up on the step-ladder. All at once he called out to Buddy, real upset:

"JONATHAN!" he yelled. "It's splitting! It's breaking in half at the center of gravity! Half of it will swing toward Jupiter, but the other half is falling this way! Falling toward us . . . fast! It may hit us all in one piece, or it may break up . . . God knows which! Either would be disastrous . Get me a paper and pencil, Jonathan. I must calculate our speed through space, plus our speed around the sun, and the mean distance . . . I think I could guess at the approximate day it will happen. Weeks, months yet, perhaps. Unless it . . ." And then I heard him sort of catch his breath, and gasp: "Oh—my my *heart!*"

Then suddenly I heard Buddy's voice cry out: *"Uncle Caleb! The ladder! Look out, it's slipping!"*

I could *hear* it all, you understand—Buddy running across the roof, and the ladder falling, and then Uncle Caleb landing on the roof all of a heap. Honest, it just drove me *bats!* Because all I could *see* was the kitchen downstairs where I'd been about an hour before, with the coffee perking away on the stove! I tried to get to Uncle Caleb,

but I kept falling over things. An hour later, of course, I saw the whole *thing*—like a movie finally being flashed on the screen, after the dialog and sound-effects are all over with.

By then, though, Mom and Dad had rushed over—I managed to get downstairs and phone them. Then the ambulance came. But Uncle Caleb was already dead, poor darling. The doctor said he must have died almost instantly. I mean, thrombosis is *like* that. He didn't suffer . . . *Buddy* was the one they took to the hospital. When Mom and Dad came, they found him sort of huddled there beside Uncle Caleb's body, just whimpering like a puppy and staring up at the sky. . . . The doctor said it was shock from seeing Uncle die like that, because all he would say to any of us was just to whisper, over and over: *"It's falling! It's falling!"*

The doctor thought he meant the step-ladder. But, you know what, I honestly think the poor little jerk is just scared silly about that old blob in the *sky!* I mean, Buddy always thought everything Uncle Caleb said was the *gospel.* He's always thought Unk was a *genius,* and we didn't *appreciate* him or something. . . .

Say! I wonder if you gentlemen would mind going by the hospital to see him, before you go back to your observatories? I mean, I *know* you all won't *blame* the poor little goon about that *letter* he wrote.

How he ever got it mailed! Some nurse, I guess. Or maybe he slipped out of his bed and put it in the mail-chute. . . Honest, I'm *awfully* sorry you came all this way, just because of a *joke.* Only, Buddy didn't *mean* it as a joke of course! . . . .

Would you go by to see him, and . you know, sort of talk a little sense into him about that silly old *asteroid* Uncle scared him about? Buddy would listen to *you.* I mean, well, you could sort of pretend you thought Uncle's lens was something *grand,* not just a silly little glass *gadget.* And then you could sort of *hint,* you know, that Uncle Caleb might be *wrong.* Not tell him, of course, that Unk was just a sweet harmless old *goof* with a crazy imagination. . . .

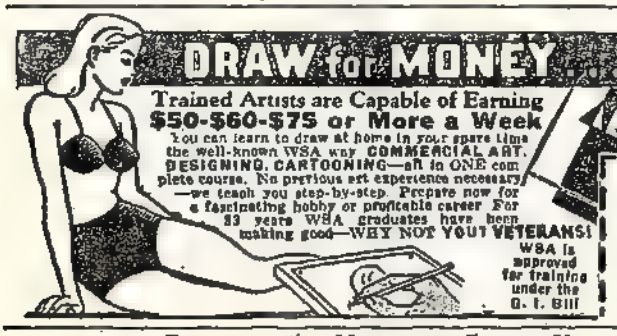
Oh! and don't *dare* tell him the lens got smashed. Mom swept out the glass yesterday, when we were cleaning up. One of the moving-men dropped it. He was *so* embarrassed, but Mom told him it was just an old *lampshade,* not valuable or anything. Mom never likes anybody to feel bad over things like that, though she knew Buddy would be *crushed* when he heard about it . . Poor little jerk! The way he just lies there in the hospital bed, staring up at the ceiling and sort of whimpering.

I mean, *he* thought that lens was something out of this world. He said yesterday—I went by to take him some jigsaw puzzles—he said if the authorities could *see* that asteroid through Unk's lens, there still might be some way we could save people when it fell . . . . Honest, isn't that *pitiful?* If you could talk to him, and tell him—in a nice way, you understand—that Uncle Caleb was just a wee bit *touched.* I mean, *anybody* but a twelve-year-old kid could *see* that lens and all that other crazy stuff was just something impossible that Unk dreamed up. . .

Couldn't they? *You* . *you* can see that, can't you gentlemen, from what I've told you . .?

What's the matter? Oh, darn! I *wish* I could *see* you, instead of all this *furniture* that isn't here! You all sound so . . . so kind of. . .

Is something the matter . . .?



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Portrait in Moonlight

BY CARL JACOBI

THE Trinidad offices of Holworth and Company, Importers and Exporters, in Weightson Road near the Port-of-Spain waterfront, were under the capable, if unprogressive, managership of Rupert Clarkson. Clarkson, in his forty-sixth year, was a widower and a rather moody individual, with a tall, loose-jointed frame, narrow shoulders, and lonely eyes. He lived in Queen's Park West, quite a distance from the Holworth offices, but he always chose to walk, claiming that he needed the exercise.

As a matter of fact, there were a number of things Clarkson felt he needed. He was in a word growing old, and none realized it more than he. There were lines and crow's feet about his eyes. He had developed a slight stoop, probably from bending for long hours over a desk, and his hair was graying rapidly.

Psychologically, Clarkson knew that he should accept these changes as a matter of course, but somehow he couldn't do that. He was still young in spirit, and the knowledge that his material body was showing some signs of wear, however slight, greatly concerned him. The bureau in his bedroom was littered with bottles of restorers, dyes, and other masculine cosmetics, all of which he had given a trial and then discarded as either worthless or too obvious in their effect.

"It's this infernal sticky heat," he said on more than one occasion. "It ages one. Trinidad is no place for a white man."

Fearful of getting into a rut, Clarkson varied the course of his walk to work each day. But he always stopped at the corner of Dundonald Street and Tragarete Road to watch an aged Negro man stand before an

So many things don't make sense here on the islands; or make a frightful sense beyond mortal detection.

Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

improvised easel on the sidewalk and paint pictures of local scenes.

The old fellow was quite good, Clarkson thought. He used a dried palm leaf for a pallette, and his colors apparently were made from crushed berries and roots which only a West Indian black would know where to obtain. One time he painted The Three Sisters, the trio of mountain peaks for which Trinidad was famous. Again it was a scene of the harbor with the many vessels at anchor there.

While interested, Clarkson had never been tempted to buy one of these paintings until one blazing afternoon in August. Then he watched the Negro add the finishing touches to a picture smaller in size than usual. In rudely lettered Spanish, it bore the title *Youth*. Curiously, it presented the likeness of a middle-aged man with a gaunt, lined face, thin lips, and eyes set wide apart. But the moment Clarkson gazed upon that face, a responsive chord was touched in his brain. The picture cost him six and threepence.

Later in his room he debated with himself as to where he should hang the painting, if indeed he should hang it at all. It was then that he noticed the five words printed in pencil on the back of the canvas. The words read:

Put me in the moonlight.

CLARKSON frowned. Picture in the moonlight. It didn't make sense. But then so many things didn't make sense here in the islands. In the end he hung the picture high up on the east wall, opposite the two French windows, and forgot about it.

For a week thereafter Clarkson was forced to forego his daily walks because of inclement weather. The rain came down in torrents, and the offices of Holworth and Company were damp and gloomy. The gloominess made him irritable, and when he was told that Stephen Farpan requested an interview, Clarkson lost his temper. Stephen was the Negro who formerly had been in the employ of the company as a messenger. His duties had included delivering last-minute notes to ship captains, the customs office, and other simple missions. In his spare time he had done a little dusting and cleaning.

"So you're here again," Clarkson said as the black shuffled into the office. "How many times do I have to tell you your services are no longer needed."

Stephen rolled a faded cap back and forth in his hands nervously.

"Please, sar," he said, "give Stephen 'nother chance. I work ver hard, sar. I tek care of letters and t'ings very rapidly."

"No." Clarkson shook his head in quiet decision. "That's just your trouble. That's why I had to let you go. You loiter, Stephen." Then he added brutally, "You might as well realize it, you're getting old, and this company is no home for the aged."

Clarkson went home that night in worse spirits than usual. Port-of-Spain was getting to be a hopelessly dull place. It seemed that all the unattached women in his club circles were either too old or too young. People never had any good times any more. He wondered what had become of that lovely Baret girl with whom he had had such wonderful times the summer of . . . Good Lord, that had been the summer of '29, eighteen years ago. It seemed incredible.

He reached his home at length, a modest "villa" set well back from the street in a grove of palmistes, and went directly to his bedroom, intending to lie down for a while before dinner. But the first thing that caught his eye as he crossed the threshold was the picture he had bought from the Negro street artist. It was a picture no longer, merely a blurred mass of run-together colors.

Clarkson went up to it and studied it for some moments. Vaguely, he could discern the outlines of the former painting: the eyes, the lips, the jaw, but that was all. He swore softly. That's what came from patronizing these blacks. They were a worthless lot, all of them.

Nevertheless, Clarkson made it a point to stop the next morning at the intersection of Dundonald Street and Tragarete Road. The Negro artist was there, his easel propped up on a shady spot of sidewalk. Without wasting words, Clarkson explained what had happened.

The black smiled. "You hang him in de sunlight," he said. "Thas de trouble. You must hang him in de moonlight."

"But that doesn't do me any good now," Clarkson said. "The picture's ruined."

Again the Negro smiled. He opened a

little tin box from among his assortment of brushes, rolled canvases and paints and drew forth a long slender stick of bamboo. In the end of it was fitted a small cap of yellowish transparent material that looked not unlike amber.

"Tek this stick, sar. Rub him all over de picture. Then he will come back."

Clarkson accepted the bamboo doubtfully. It occurred to him as he lingered there that there was something strangely familiar about the Negro's face. Then he remembered Stephen Tarpan; of course, the artist and his former messenger must be related. He was about to ask if this were true, but for some reason his query died unspoken.

The weather turned clear that day, and early in the evening a full moon came up. Clarkson carefully massaged his face with a new kind of cleansing clay he had sent for from the States and retired early. He awoke in the middle of the night with the moon shining through his open window. It was also shining on the faded painting on the wall, and he remembered suddenly the artist's instructions as to how to restore it. He got out of bed, took up the bamboo stick from the bureau and began to run the capped end slowly back and forth over the blurred canvas. For a moment he was conscious of an electric thrill, like a faint vibration, passing from the bamboo stick up his wrist into his arm. Then the sensation passed, only to be followed by a vague impression that the faded lips in the painting had curved upward and were smiling at him. Clarkson rubbed his eyes sleepily and went back to bed.

He did not sleep well the rest of the night. The skin about his cheeks and lower jaw and across his abdomen seemed to have become tight and drawn. He was conscious, too, of his heart beating more rapidly than usual. Shortly before dawn he fell into a heavy slumber and dreamed a gloomy unpleasant dream that he was a boy again but that all his friends were old men and old women.

WHEN he awoke, the first thing that focused into his eyes was the picture. He sat bolt upright, staring. The painting was completely restored! Gazing back at him from the depths of brilliant pigment was the face of the middle-aged man with the wide-apart eyes. But the face could hardly be called middle-aged now. There was an indefinable freshness to it that changed its appearance entirely. It was as if ten years of time had been removed from it.

Clarkson got his second start when he went into the bathroom to shave. The reflection that looked back at him from the mirror was different from yesterday morning or even a morning a year ago. The crow's-feet above his eyes were still there, but they had thinned perceptibly. The bald spot over the left temple was covered with a nice growth of hair. And his hair! It was a rich, shiny black with only the faintest trace of gray.

It couldn't be that cleansing clay, Clarkson told himself; but what then was responsible for the change? After a moment it came to him that perhaps the signs of age he thought he had detected before had existed only in his imagination. He broke out into a cheery whistle as he pursued this line of reasoning, took particular pains with his dress that morning and headed for work in a fine fettle.

That day was a memorable one in Clarkson's life. From the moment he first entered the Holworth offices and was greeted by his stenographer to the time he met Inspector Bainley of the Trinidad Constabulary on his way home, the hours presented one steady round of complimentary remarks about his youthful appearance. Bainley was even more enthusiastic than the others.

"What the devil have you done, Clarkson," the inspector said, "found your own private fountain of youth? You look positively juvenile today."

Only one circumstance in fact marred the day's routine. Late in the afternoon Stephen Tarpan approached Clarkson again, asking for a return to his job. The whining insistance of the black broke the manager's patience. He matched Stephen to the door, and then when the Negro still hesitated, he gave him a forceful push down the stairs. Stephen pitched headlong, rolling over and over to the bottom. He lay there motionless a long time while Clarkson suffered a pang of dismay. Then with a low moan he got painfully to his feet and hobbled off.

That night was almost a repetition of the night before. Some time in the small hours

Clarkson awoke to find a shaft of brilliant moonlight shining into the room and illuminating the portrait on the wall. The face in the painting seemed to be smiling even more broadly now. Yet Clarkson got the impression that there was no mirth in the smile, but rather that the lips were parted in a kind of hideous mockery. Again he slept badly during the remaining hours, and again he felt that same drawing sensation in the skin of his face, abdomen, and to a lesser extent, his legs. When he began to dream, it was a wild fantastic dream, without sense or meaning.

He was walking along a broad highway that ran straight as a crayon line to the horizon. Flanking the highway on either side were the brown stumps of chopped-down trees, and upon each stump stood the black-garbed figure of a very old man, leaning on a long cane. As Clarkson strode past these figures, he looked at their faces, and he saw that each was the face of some acquaintance he had known or met in the past. And with each step he took he felt the years sloughing off him, felt himself growing incredibly younger.

The next morning Clarkson was amazed at what he saw in the glass. He beheld a man of scarcely thirty. The crow's feet had entirely disappeared. There was not a thread of gray in his hair, and his complexion was clear and alive with the freshness of youth.

So great was the change that he had some misgivings about what his fellow workers at the office would say. Accordingly, with a little smile of satisfaction, he dusted a little talcum over his temples. Whatever miracle he had stumbled upon—and it must be a miracle—it would not do to let his friends become curious all at once.

No easel or Negro artist met his gaze at the street corner that morning. Mildly curious, Clarkson was prompted to enter the tobacconist's shop in front of which the black had always done his painting and inquire as to his whereabouts.

"I don't know where he is," the tobacconist said. "He left here in a hurry yesterday, saying that his brother had been injured in a fall down a flight of stairs."

Arriving at the Holworth and Company offices, Clarkson found an important letter waiting for him. The letter required his presence at Fort de France, Martinique, immediately. The *Compagnie de Français,* an import concern with which the Holworth branch had had dealings, was aroused over what it claimed to be false representation of merchandise. Clarkson might have entrusted his reply to the post or the wireless, but the *Compagnie de Français* was a big account, and he preferred to arrange matters in person.

There was just time to catch the *Island Queen.* He left word that he would be gone for a week and hurried home to pack a few necessities.

THE instant he entered his room he was aware that a prowler had been there. One of his bureau drawers was partially open, and the bamboo stick given him by the Negro artist lay on the floor, not on the table where he had left it. A faint spicy odor lingered in the air. A quick search, however, failed to reveal any stolen valuables. Clarkson made sure his door was locked before he left.

Two days later he walked down the gangplank of the *Island Queen* and entered Fort de France. It was ten years since he had been in Martinique, and the island seemed strange to him. Historic Fort Louis with its massive walls and battlements brooded over the harbor, and in the background Mont Pele towered, quiet now since its earth-shattering eruption of 1902. Only the *Savane,* the open park in the center of the town, studded with royal palms, looked cool and inviting under the tropical sun.

No more than an hour was required for Clarkson to convince the French company manager that an error had been made, and the Holworth import man found himself faced with two full days and nights before he could return to Trinidad.

He took a room at the Hotel de la Paix, drank an aperitif, and ate his luncheon. It was while he sat enjoying a cigar in the hotel dining room that he suddenly became aware of the young woman at a table some distance away. He was on his feet in a moment, striding across to her.

"Mona Albrey," he greeted. "How are you? What on earth are you doing here?"

The woman's face broke into a smile of surprise and recognition as she looked up.

"Why, hello, Rupert," she said. "Don't tell me you've exchanged Trinidad for Martinique in your old age?"

"No, I'm still living in Port-of-Spain," Clarkson replied. "I'm here on business." And added, "Do I look older?"

She was a handsome brunette in her early forties, dressed in a cool linen suit, with a pert green hat to match her jade earrings. She gazed across the table with eyes filled with admiration.

"Not a bit of it," she said. "In fact, you look so boyish I hardly would have recognized you."

They sat there, chatting of old times and idle gossip. At length Mona Albrey reached for her purse. She was doing an article for an American magazine on native costumes, she explained. She had all her material, but as a final wind-up she wanted to take in a Martinican festival scheduled for that afternoon in a village near St. Pierre.

"Want to come along?" she asked. "It's only about forty kilometers, and I have a rented car outside."

Clarkson replied that nothing would please him more. They drove north out of Fort de France, crossed the fashionable residential Plateau Didier, and then followed the highway through the villages of Balata and Absalon. Here Mona Albrey turned off into a wretched side road that climbed steadily into the highlands. As he sat beside her, Clarkson began to experience a feeling of unease. The drawing and tightening sensation about his skin was there again, though latent, and he knew that that feeling presaged a change again in his appearance. How long, he wondered, would this retrogressive action on the part of his age continue. It seemed he could feel a fresh vitality rippling through his body with each passing hour. Right now, in fact, he felt like leaping from the car and racing it on foot up the hill.

Mona Albrey shifted her hands on the wheel.

"You know, Rupert, the air in these latitudes must agree with you. I declare, you positively look as if you were still in your twenties."

Clarkson thought of the portrait back in his room in Port-of-Spain and the strange series of events that had so changed his life since he had obtained it. Did that painting exert a power upon him? Was it his imagination or was he growing younger even as the man in the portrait grew younger?

Then all at once he had other things to occupy his mind.

The car missed firing, slowly, and stopped. Mona jiggled the controls on the dashboard, pressed the starter repeatedly without results. She turned helplessly.

"I'll fix it," Clarkson said. "I'm rather good at this sort of thing."

BUT the hours dragged past, and still he labored with greasy hands under the car's bonnet. When at length he stepped back with a sigh, and the motor roared into life once more, shadows had begun to lengthen across the road and a golden moon was rising above the tree-tops.

And simultaneously with the appearance of that moon, Clarkson felt the drawing and tightening increase about his body a hundredfold. His complacent satisfaction was gone now. In its place a dull horror began to creep upon him. For he realized that with each passing minute he was slowly but irresistibly growing younger.

It was now, of course, too late to attend the festival. Mona drove rapidly back toward town, her hands playing nervously with the wheel. From time to time she cast an uneasy glance at the man beside her. Yet as the miles passed, they saw no sign of the highway.

"I'm certain we should have turned left at that last fork," Clarkson said. "This stretch of road doesn't seem familiar at all."

The countryside appeared to be growing wilder and more rugged. They crossed deep valleys over narrow ramshackle bridges that threatened to plunge them into the roaring streams below. Jungle took the place of open savannah. Tall bearded cabbage palms towered up into a blue-black sky, and in the moonlight massive ferns loomed like so many phantoms crouching on either side of the road.

They were crossing a narrow plateau when abruptly a low sound reached their ears over the hum of the car's motor. It was the sound of drums, and it grew steadily louder as they advanced. The road made a sudden turn. Before them a small glade was revealed in the flanking wall of trees, and in

its center a large fire blazed luridly. Around that fire a group of shadowy figures paced slowly to the tempo of muted tom-toms.

Mona stopped the car and watched them for some minutes in silence.

"A voodoo dance," she said at length. "Come on. I want to see this."

With misgivings, Clarkson followed her out of the car. Keeping carefully in the shadows, they entered the rank undergrowth and made their way forward until they reached a point twenty yards from the fire.

Clarkson saw then that there were about twenty Negroes in the group. All were in poor nondescript costume save a very old black woman who wore a full skirt of flowered silk with a gaudy fichu about her throat and a flaming red *madras* over her head. Heavy gold earrings glittered in the firelight.

Other details came into focus then as the Trinidad manager's eyes accustomed themselves in the gloom. Tied to a stake at the far side of the glade and bleating tremulously was a young goat. Beside the fire stood an upturned tree stump like a rude altar, on the top of which rested an earthen cup and a brass crucifix. And suspended from vine lashings above hung the squirming and twisting body of a captive fer-de-lance.

These were the physical details. But as Clarkson looked into the faces of the blacks, as he saw the unbridled fanaticism in their eyes, a wave of loathing swept through him.

THE ceremony began with a multiple-voiced shout. The *mamaloi* in the crimson turban seized a long hooked knife and with a cry plunged it into the throat of the goat. An instant later the earthen cup was filled with the spurting blood from the dying animal. The frenzied blacks dipped hands into the crimson cup and leaped and danced to the wild rhythm of the tom-toms. Then suddenly the drums fell silent, and an ancient black man hobbled into the light of the fire.

The *mamaloi* approached him, carrying a long narrow wooden box. She opened its cover and drew out a length of bamboo, capped at one end with an amber-like substance. She dipped the capped end into the blood cup and began to rub it over the body of the aged black. Horror blanketed Clarkson. The stick was the same kind of bamboo given him by the Negro street artist in Port-of-Spain.

And then as he watched he saw the old black before him rapidly change in physical appearance. The flesh on his wrinkled face sloughed away; his body became erect, thinner and smaller. Now he was a callow youth of fifteen, now a young boy, and finally as the wasting-away process continued, a squawling infant that squirmed on the ground helplessly. It was all vague and indistinct with the light from the fire flickering uncertainly.

The *mamaloi* seized the knife and approached the child. But Clarkson had seen enough. He seized Mona's arm and led her stumbling back to the car.

They spoke no words during the remainder of the drive. Miraculously, a few miles beyond the road branched into the main highway, and presently they were back in Fort de France. Clarkson said goodnight and goodbye to Mona Albrey and climbed the stairs to his room. There he threw himself on the bed, covered his eyes and moaned aloud.

In heaven's name, what was happening to him? How long would this change continue? What was the cause of it? Lying there in the darkness, he strove to throttle the horror that was engulfing him and apply logic and reasoning to the enigma. But it was all a wild chaotic dream without reason or motive.

Only one fact was clear to him. In some incredible way his life was tied up with that portrait on the wall in his room in Port-of-Spain. When the moonlight shone upon it, as it must be doing tonight, he grew steadily younger. When the moonlight passed, time for him moved on again.

He must get back to Trinidad and tear that painting from the wall!

BUT there was still another day and night to be spent in Fort de France before the boat would leave. Morning, and Clarkson deliberately avoided looking at himself in the mirror. He ate his breakfast in the dining room, and he thought the waiter looked at him oddly several times. He went out on the street and began to walk in long brisk

strides, heading toward the *Savane*. Beside the statue of Empress Josephine he paused a moment. A youth scarcely out of his teens approached and addressed him in French.

"Pardon, M'sieu, am I early or have the others gone already?"

Clarkson regarded him curiously. "There must be some mistake," he said. And added inanely, "I'm a stranger here, you know."

"Of course," said the other, covering his embarrassment, "it was stupid of me. But I was told all the young people who were going to Mademoiselle Chauson's country drive would meet here, and when I saw you, I thought that . . . Ah, here they are now."

A group of rollicking young people approached down the street, followed by three old-fashioned horse-drawn phaetons. Quickly the youth joined them, and the procession moved to the far side of the square. Clarkson ran a hand slowly over his beardless jaw. *None of the group was more than nineteen or twenty years old!*

Was it possible he now looked so young the boy had mistaken him for one of his companions?

Deep in thought, Clarkson began to walk again, moving aimlessly down Rue Schoelcher, emerging at length into Place Barre. A small sign announced a book shop some distance ahead, and he stumbled toward it like a man seeking a sanctuary.

A bell jangled as he entered. Inside was dust and a bald-pated proprietor with pince-nez glasses. Clarkson moved down the row of shelves, seeing neither titles nor authors' names. He pulled down books at random and returned them after absently riffling their pages. In this manner he read the opening pages of a half dozen long out-of-date novels and travel books. But suddenly his eyes focused on the volume in his hands. It was a well-worn copy of *Voodooism in the West Indies* by Rene Callott, and with unsteady hands he opened it.

For half an hour he stood there in the half light, reading descriptions of the black practices, followed in the name of superstition in the islands. Rites which had their origin in West Africa and imported to the Caribbean during "blackbirding" or slave-trade days. He was about to replace the book when a passage caught his gaze.

One rite which the author has never witnessed, but which the authorities, McCullough and Brissac, have both reported to be practiced not infrequently by blacks of Trinidad and Martinique, is the ceremony of the bamboo *tevail* or Damballah stick. This is a variation of serpent worship and probably has its source somewhere in the Niger river country. The *tevail* is formed from a length of bamboo cut by the *mamaloi* and capped at one end by a transparent substance. (McCullough calls this substance *lessadum* and states that it is formed from the serum and digestive juices of the *fer-de-lance*, to which has been added the crushed seeds of the *daatura* plant.)

According to the superstition, the *tevail*, when rubbed upon a person's body, causes a retrogression of age. Another belief associated with the *tevail*, but even less founded upon fact, is that when used upon some possession of the person, which in turn is placed in the moonlight, the reversal to youth will continue as long as that object is left in the moonlight . . . *until life itself is gone.*

Clarkson read that passage three times. Carefully, with an unsteady finger, he traced that last sentence word for word. Then with a short cry he flung the book to the floor and rushed madly from the shop.

HE WAS on the ship at last. The door to his cabin was closed and locked. The two ports were shut tight, and the electric lights were turned out. In utter darkness Clarkson lay on the bed, body bathed in cold perspiration.

It was midnight, and up on deck the ship was swathed in moonlight. Moonlight, too, Clarkson knew, was shining over Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, was shining through the windows into his room and upon the portrait on the wall. He could sense it, could feel it with every fiber of his body. As if he were encased in a steel net, the skin about his chest, his abdomen, his legs, arms, and face grew steadily tighter.

Clarkson knew that he had shrunk in stature by more than half. His body was now that of a small boy. And as he lay there and Time flowed backward, he looked through

the darkness at the far wall. Was he quite mad, or did he see that portrait there shining with an evil luminosity, the face growing steadily younger. . . .

. . . he was flying his kite on the high knoll back on his Connecticut farm home. The wind was cool on his face, and he could hear his mother calling him. He turned and began to run toward the house, but halfway his little legs fell as he tried to climb the steps. . His mother gathered him in her arms and placed him in his crib, crooning to him softly. . . . The white milk felt warm and good in his throat . . . and he closed his eyes as the blackness of infinity slowly gathered about him.

INSPECTOR BAINLEY of the Trinidad Constabulary had given the room a thorough search without result.

"It looks like a closed case as far as our end is concerned," he told the Warrant Officer. "This chap, Clarkson, left for Martinique on Tuesday noon. He was due back here the following Wednesday at the latest, according to ship schedules. We know that he registered at the Hotel de la Paix in Fort de France and that he embarked for the return trip to Trinidad."

"He seems to have left nothing behind in this room, the Warrant Officer said, "nothing that would show he was despondent or that he feared foul play."

Bainley nodded, frowning. "The facts are tight at every point. Clarkson complained of feeling ill, declared that he would stay in his cabin and requested that he not be disturbed. The steward had instructions to leave his trays outside the cabin door. No one saw Clarkson after he boarded the vessel at Fort de France. Yet when it docked at Port-of-Spain, Clarkson had disappeared. Vanished utterly! And his cabin was locked from the inside. . . . What the devil are you staring at?"

The Warrant Officer's eyes were wide with incredulity.

"This picture on the wall, sir," he said. "I could have sworn that it was the portrait of a very young baby when I first entered the room. Now, as you can see, sir, it's a blank canvas."

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Clair de Lune

BY
SEABURY QUINN

Heading by BORIS DOLGOV

MY FRIEND de Grandin turned to me, brows raised, lips pursed as if about to whistle. "*Comment?*" he demanded. "What is that you say?"

"You understand me perfectly," I grinned back. "I said that if I didn't know you for a case-hardened misogynist I'd think you contemplated an *affaire* with that woman. You've hardly taken your eyes off her since we came here."

The laugh lights gleamed in his small, round, blue eyes and he tweaked the ends of his diminutive wheat-blond mustache like a tomcat combing his whiskers after an especially toothsome meal. "*Eh, bien,* my old and rare, she interests me—"

The actress had an incredible, faery beauty that was other-worldy—and why not?

"So I gathered—"

"And is she not one *bonne bouchée* to merit anybody's interest, I demand to know?"

"She is," I admitted. "She's utterly exquisite, but the way you've ogled her, like a moonstruck calf—"

"Oh, Dr. Trowbridge, Dr. de Grandin!" Miss Templeton, the resort's hostess and all 'round promoter of good times, came fairly dancing toward us across the hotel veranda, "I'm so thrilled!"

"Indeed, *Mademoiselle?*" de Grandin rose and gave her a particularly engaging smile. "One is rejoiced to hear it. What is the cause of your so happy quivering?"

"It's Madelon Leroy!" In ordinary conversation thrilled, delighted laughter seemed about to break through everything Dot Templeton said, and her sentences were punctuated exclusively with exclamation points. Now she positively talked in italics. "She's coming to our dance tonight! You know, she's been so *frightfully* exclusive since she came here—said she came down to the shore to rest and didn't want to meet a soul. But's she's relented, and will hold an informal reception just before the hop—"

"*Tiens*, but this is of the interest, truly," he cut in. "You may count upon our presence at the soirée, *Mademoiselle*. But of course."

As Dot danced off to spread glad tidings of great joy to other guests he glanced down at his wrist. "*Mon Dieu*, friend Trowbridge," he exclaimed, "it is almost one o'clock, and we have not yet lunched. Come, let us hasten to the dining room. Me, I am almost starved. I faint, I perish! I am vilely hungry."

TWO tables away from us, where a gentle breeze fanned through a long window facing the ocean, Madelon Leroy sat at luncheon, cool, almost contemptuous of the looks leveled at her. She was, as Jules de Grandin had remarked, *a bonne bouchée* deserving anyone's attention. Her first performance in the name part of Eric Maxwell's *Clair de Lune* had set the critics raving, not only over her talent as an actress, but over her exquisite, faery beauty, her delicate fragility that seemed almost other-worldly. When, after a phenomenally long run on Broadway she refused flatly to consider Hollywood's most tempting offers, she stirred up a maelstrom of publicity that set theatrical press agents raving mad. Artists were permitted to sketch her, but she steadfastly refused to be photographed, and to thwart ambitious camera fiends and newsmen she went veiled demurely as a nun or odalisk when she appeared in public. *Clair de Lune* had closed for the summer, and its mysterious, lovely star was resting by the sea when Jules de Grandin and I checked in at the Adlon.

Covertly I studied her above the margin of my menu; de Grandin made no pretense of detachment, but stared at her as no one but a Frenchman can stare without giving offense. She was a lovely thing to look at, with her dead-white, almost transparent skin, her spun-gold hair, unbobbed, that made a halo of glory around her small head, and great, trustful-seeming eyes of soft, cerulean blue. There was a sort of fairylike, almost angelic fragility about her arching, slender neck and delicately cut profile; and though she was not really small she seemed so, for she was slender and small-boned, not like a Watteau shepherdess, but like a little girl, and every move she made was graceful and unhurried as grain bending in the wind. With her fragile fairness outlined against the window she was like some princess from a fairy tale come wondrously to life, the very spirit and epitome of all the fair, frail heroines of poetry.

"*Une belle créature, n'est-ce-pas?*" de Grandin asked as the waiter appeared to take our order, and he lost all interest in our fair neighbor. Women to him were blossoms brightening the pathway of life, but food—and drink—"*mon Dieu,*" as he was wont to say, "they are that without which life is impossible!"

MISS LEROY held court like a princess at the reception preceding the ball that evening. If she had seemed captivating in the shadowed recess of the dining room, or on the wide veranda of the hotel, or emerging from the ocean in white satin bathing suit, dripping and lovely as a naiad, she was positively ravishing that night. More than ever she seemed like a being from another world in a sleeveless gown of clinging, white silk jersey that followed every curve and

small roundness of her daintily moulded figure. It was belted at the waist with a gold cord whose tasselled ends hung almost to the floor, and as its hem swept back occasionally we caught fleeting glimpses of the little, gilded sandals strapped to her bare feet.

Her pale-gold hair was done in a loose knot and tied with a fillet of narrow, white ribbon. About her left arm, just above the elbow, was a broad, gold bracelet chased with a Grecian motif, otherwise she wore no jewelry or ornaments.

She should have been completely charming, altogether lovely, but there was something vaguely repellent about her. Perhaps it was her slow and rather condescending smile that held no trace of warmth or human friendliness, perhaps it was the odd expression of her eyes—knowing, weary, rather sad, as if from their first opening they had seen people were a tiresome race, and hardly worth the effort of a second glance. Or possibly it might have been the eyes themselves, for despite her skillful makeup and the pains obviously taken with her by beauticians there was a fine lacework of wrinkles at their outer corners, and the lids were rubbed to the sheen of old silk with a faintly greenish eyeshadow; certainly not the lids of a woman in her twenties, or even in her middle thirties.

"Dr. Trowbridge," she extended a hand small and slender as a child's, rosy-tipped and fragile as a white iris, and, "Dr. de Grandin," as the little Frenchman clicked his heels before her.

"*Enchanté,*" *Mademoiselle,*" he bowed above the little hand and raised it to his lips, "*mais je suis très heureux de vous voir!* —but I am fortunate to meet you!"

There is no way of putting it in words, but as de Grandin straightened, he and Madelon Leroy looked squarely in each other's eyes, and while nothing moved in either of their faces something vague, intangible as air, yet perceptible as a chill, seemed forming round them like an envelope of cold vapor. For just an instant each took stock of the other, wary as a fencer measuring his opponent or a boxer feeling out his adversary, and I had the feeling they were like two chemicals that waited only the addition of a catalytic agent to explode them in a devastating detonation. Then the next guest was presented and we passed on, but I felt as if we had stepped back into normal summer temperature from a chilled refrigerator.

"Whatever—" I began, but the advent of Mazie Schaeffer interrupted my query.

"Oh, Dr. Trowbridge, isn't she *adorable?*" asked Mazie. "She's the most beautiful, the most wonderful actress in the world! There never was another like her. I've heard Dad and Mumsie talk about Maude Adams and Bernhardt and Duse, but Madelon Leroy—she's really tops! D'ye remember her in the last scene of *Clair de Lune,* where she says goodbye to her lover at the convent gate, then stands there—just stands there in the moonlight, saying nothing, but you can fairly *see* her heart breaking?"

De Grandin grinned engagingly at Mazie. "Perhaps it is that she has had much time to perfect her art, *Mademoiselle—*"

"Time?" Mazie echoed almost shrilly. "How could she have had time? She's just a girl—hardly more than a child. I'm twenty-one in August, and I'll bet she's two years my junior. It isn't time or talent, Dr. de Grandin, it's genius, sheer genius. Only one woman in a generation has it, and she has it—in spades!—for hers."

The little Frenchman studied her attentively. "You have perhaps met her?"

"Met her?" Mazie seemed upon the point of swooning, and her hands went to her bosom as if she would quiet a tumultuous heart. "Oh, *yes.* She was lovely to me—told me I might come to her suite for tea tomorrow—"

"*Mon Dieu!*" de Grandin exploded. "So soon? Do you mean it, *Mademoiselle?*"

"Yes, isn't it too wonderful? Much, much too fearfully wonderful to have happened to anyone like me!"

"You speak correctly," he agreed with a nod. "Fearfully wonderful is right. *Bon soir, Mademoiselle.*"

"Now," I demanded as we left the crowded ballroom and went out on the wide, breeze-swept veranda, "what's it all mean?"

"I only wish I knew," he answered somberly.

"Oh, for goodness' sake," I was nettled and made no attempt to hide it, "don't be so devilishly mysterious! I know there's some-

thing between you and that woman—I could fairly feel it when you met. But what—"

"I only wish I knew," he repeated almost morosely. "To suspect is one thing, to know is something else again, and I, *hélas!* have no more than a naked suspicion. To say what gnaws my mind like a maggot might do a grave injustice to an innocent one. *Au contraire,* to keep silent may cause great and lasting injury to another. *Parbleu,* my friend, I know not what to do. I am entirely miserable."

I glanced at my watch. "We might try going to bed. It's after eleven, and we go back tomorrow morning. This will be our last sure chance of a night's sleep. No patients to rouse us at all sorts of unholy hours—"

"No babies to be ushered in, no *viellards* to be erased out of the world," he agreed with a chuckle. "I think you have right, my old one. Let us lose our troubles in our dreams."

NEXT morning as, preceded by two bellboys with our traps, we were about to leave the hotel, I stepped aside to make way for two women headed for the beach. The first was middle-aged, with long, sharp nose and small, sharp eyes, dark-haired, swarthy-skinned, with little strands of gray in her black hair and the white linen cap of a maid on her head. Her uniform was stiff, black bombazine and set off by a white apron and cuffs. Across her arm draped a huge, fluffy bath towel. She looked formidable to me, the sort of person who had seen much better days and had at last retired from a world that used her shabbily to commune secretly with ineffectual devils.

Behind her, muffled like an Arab woman in a hooded robe of white terry cloth, a smaller figure shuffled in wooden beach clogs. The fingers of one hand protruded from a fold of the robe as she clutched it about her, and I noted they were red-tipped, with long, sharp-pointed nails, and thin almost to the point of desiccation. Beneath the muffling hood of the robe we caught a glimpse of her face. It was Madelon Leroy's, but so altered that it bore hardly any semblance to that of the radiant being of the night before. She was pale as March moonlight, and the delicate, small hollows underneath her cheekbones were accentuated till her countenance seemed positively ghastly. Her narrow lips, a little parted, seemed almost withered, and about her nose there was a pinched, drawn look, while her large sky-hued eyes seemed even larger, yet seemed to have receded in her head. Her whole face seemed instinct with longing, yet a longing that was impersonal. The only thing unchanged about her was her grace of movement, for she walked with an effortless, gliding step, turning her flat hips only slightly.

"Grand Dieu!" I heard de Grandin murmur, then, as she passed he bowed and raised his hand to his hat brim in salute. *"Mademoiselle!"*

She passed as if he had not been there, her deep-set, cavernous eyes fixed on the sunlit beach where little wavelets wove a line of lacy ruffles on the sand.

"Good heavens," I exclaimed as we proceeded to our waiting car, "she looks ten—twenty—years older. What do you make of it?"

He faced me somberly. "I do not quite know, friend Trowbridge. Last night I entertained suspicion. Today I have the almost-certainty. Tomorrow I may know exactly, but by tomorrow it may be too late."

"What are you driving at?" I demanded. "All this mystery about—"

"Do you remember this quotation?" he countered: *"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!?"*

I thought a moment. "Isn't that what Voltaire said about history—'the more it changes, the more it is the same?' "

"It is," he agreed with another sober nod, "and never did he state a greater truth. Once more I damn think history is about to repeat, and with what tragic consequences none can say."

"Tragic consequences? To whom?"

"On ne sait pas?" he raised his narrow shoulders in a shrug. "Who can say where lightning designs to strike, my old?"

WE HAD been home from the shore a week or so, and I was just preparing to call it a day when the office telephone began to stutter. "Sam, this is Jane Schaeffer," came the troubled hail across the wire. "Can you come over right away?"

"What's wrong?" I temporized. The day had been a hot and tiring one, and Nora McGinnis had prepared veal with sweet and sour sauce. I was in no mood to drive two miles, miss my evening cocktail and sit down to a spoiled dinner.

"It's Mazie. She seems so much worse—"

"Worse?" I echoed. "She seemed all right when I saw her down at the shore. Lively as a cricket—"

"That's just it. She was well and healthy as a pony when she came home, but she's been acting so queerly, and getting weaker every day. I'm afraid it's consumption or leukemia, or something—"

"Now, take it easy," I advised. "Mazie can't dance every night till three o'clock and play tennis every afternoon without something giving way. Give her some toast and tea for dinner, put her to bed, and see she stays there all night, then bring her round to see me in the morning—"

"Sam Trowbridge, listen to me! My child is dying—and not dying on her feet, either, and you tell me to give her toast and tea! You get right in your car this minute and come over, or—"

"All right," I placated. "Put her to bed, and I'll—"

"She's in bed now, you great booby. That's what I've been trying to tell you. She hasn't been up all day. She's too weak—"

"Why didn't you say so at first?" I interrupted rather unreasonably. "Hold everything. I'll be right over—"

"What presents itself, *mon vieux?*" de Grandin appeared at the office door, a beaded cocktail shaker in his hand. "Do not say that you must leave. The martinis are at the perfect state of chilliness—"

"Not now," I refused sadly. "Jane Schaeffer just called to say Mazie's in a bad way. So weak she couldn't rise this morning—"

"*Feu noir du diable*—black fire of Satan! Is it that small happy one who is selected as the victim? *Morbleu,* I should have apprehended it—"

"What's that?" I interrupted sharply. "What d'ye know—"

"*Hélas,* I know nothing. Not a thing, by blue! But if what I have good reason to damn suspect is true—come, let us hasten, let us fly, let us rush with all celerity to attend her! Dinner? Fie upon dinner! We have other things to think of, us."

HER mother had not overstated Mazie's condition. We found her in a state of semi-coma, with sharp concavities beneath her cheekbones and violet crescents underneath her eyes. The eyes themselves were bright as if with fever, but the hand I took in mine was cold as a dead thing, and when I read my clinical thermometer I saw it registered a scant eighty, while her pulse was thin and reedy, beating less than seventy slow, feeble strokes a minute. She rolled her head listlessly as I dropped into a chair beside the bed, and the smile she offered me was a thin ghost of her infectious grin which did no more than move her lips a little and never reached her eyes.

"What's going on here?" I demanded, noting how the epidermis of her hand seemed dry and roughened, almost as if it were chapped. "What have they been doing to my girl?"

The lids drooped sleepily above the feverishly bright eyes and she murmured in a voice so weak that I could not catch her reply. "What?" I asked.

"Le—let me go—I must—I have to—" she begged in a feeble whisper. "She'll be expecting me—she needs me—"

"Delirium?" I whispered, but de Grandin shook his head in negation.

"I do not think so, my friend. She is weak, yes; very weak, but not irrational. No, I would not say it. Cannot you read the symptoms?"

"If it weren't that we saw her horse-strong and well fed as an alderman less than two weeks ago, I'd say she is the victim of primary starvation. I saw cases showing all these symptoms after World War I when I was with the Belgian Relief—"

"Your wisdom and experience have not deserted you, my old one. It is that she starves—at least she is undernourished, and we would be advised to prescribe nux vomica for her, but first to see that she has strong beef tea with sherry in it, and after that some egg and milk with a little brandy—"

"But how could she possibly have developed such an advanced case of malnutrition in these few days—"

"*Ha,* yes, by damn it! That is for us to find out."

"What is it?" asked Jane Schaeffer as we came down the stairs. "Do you think she could have picked up an infection at the shore?"

De Grandin pursed his lips and took his chin between his thumb and forefinger. "*Pas possible, Madame.* How long has she been thus?"

"Almost since the day she came back. She met Madelon Leroy the actress at the shore, and developed one of those desperate girl-crushes on her. She's spent practically every waking moment with Miss Leroy, and—let's see, was it the second or the third day?—I think it was the third day she called on her since she came home almost exhausted and went right to bed. Next morning she seemed weak and listless, rose about noon, ate a big brunch, and went right back to Miss Leroy's. That night she came home almost in collapse and every day she's seemed to grow weaker."

He eyed her sharply. "You say her appetite is excellent?"

"Excellent? It's stupendous. You don't think she could have a malignant tapeworm, do you, or some such parasite—"

He nodded thoughtfully. "I think she might, indeed, *Madame.*" Then, with what seemed to me like irrelevance: "This Miss Leroy, where is it that she lives, if you please?"

"She took a suite at the Zachary Taylor. Why she chose to stay here rather than New York I can't imagine—"

"Perhaps there are those who can, Madame Schaeffer. So. Very good. She took up quarters at the Hotel Taylor, and—"

"And Mazie's been to see her every day."

Très bon. One understands, in part, at least. Your daughter's illness is not hopeless, but it is far more serious than we had at first suspected. We shall send her to the Sidewell Sanitorium at once, and there she is to have complete bed rest with a nurse constantly beside her. On no account are you to say where she has gone, *Madame,* and she must have no visitors. None. You comprehend?"

"Yes, sir. But—"

"Yes? But—"

"Miss Leroy has called her twice today, and seemed concerned when she heard Mazie could not get up. If she should call to see—"

"I said no visitors, *Madame.* It is an order, if you please."

"I HOPE you know what you're doing," I grumbled as we left the Schaeffer house. "I can't find fault with your diagnosis or treatment, but why be so mysterious about it? If you know something—"

"Alas, my friend, that is just what I do not," he admitted. "It is not that I make the mystery purposely; it is that I am ignorant. Me, I am like a blind man teased by naughty little boys. I reach this way and that for my tormentors, but nothing can my reaching fingers grasp. You recall that we were speaking of the way that history repeats itself?"

"Yes, the morning we left the shore."

"Quite yes. Now, listen carefully, my friend. What I shall say may not make sense, but then, again, it may. Consider:

"More years ago than I like to remember I went to the Théâtre Français to see one called Madelon Larue. She was the toast of Paris, that one, for in an age when we were prim and prosy by today's standards she made bold to dance *au naturelle. Parbleu,* I thought myself a sad dog when I went to see her!" He nodded gravely. "She was very beautiful, her; not beautiful like Venus or Minerva, but like Hebe or Clytie, with a dainty, almost childlike loveliness, and an artlessness that made her nudity a thing of beauty rather than of passion. *Eh bien,* my *gran'père*—may the sod lie lightly on him! —had been a gay dog in his day, also. He was summering near Narbonne that year, and when I went to visit him and partake of his excellent Chateau Neuf and told him I had seen Larue he was amazed.

"For why? Because, *parbleu,* it seems that in the days of the Second Empire there had been an actress who was also the toast of Paris, one Madelon Larose. She, too, had danced *à découvert* before the gilded youth who flocked about the third Napoleon. He had seen her, worshiped her from afar, been willing to lay down his life for her. He told me of her fragile, childlike beauty that set men's hearts and brains ablaze and when he finished telling I knew Made-

lon Larose and Madelon Larue were either one and the same or mother and daughter. *Ha,* but he told me something else, my *gran'père.* Yes. He was a lawyer-physician, that one, and as such connected with the *préfecture de police.*

"This Madelon Larose, her of the fragile, childlike beauty, began to age all suddenly. Within the space of one small month she grew ten—twenty—years older. In sixty days she was so old and feeble she could no longer appear on the stage. Then, I ask you, what happened?"

"She retired," I suggested ironically.

"Not she, by blue! She engaged a secretary and companion, a fine upstanding Breton girl and—attend me carefully, if you please—within two months the girl was dead, apparently of starvation, and Madelon Larose was once more dancing *sans chemise* to the infinite delight of the young men of Paris. Yes.

"There was a scandal, naturally. The police and the *sûreté* made investigations. Of course. But when all had been pried into they were no wiser than before. The girl had been a strong and healthy wench. The girl was dead, apparently of inanition; Larose had seemed upon the point of dissolution from old age; now she was young and strong and lovelier than ever. That was all. One does not base a criminal prosecution on such evidence. *Enfin,* the girl was buried decently in Père Lachaise, and Larose —at the suggestion of the police—betook herself to Italy. What she did there is anybody's guess.

"Now, let us match my story with my *gran'père's:* It was in 1905 I saw Larue perform. Five years later, when I had become a member of *la faculté de médicine légale,* I learned she had been smitten with a strange disease, an illness that caused her to age a decade in a week; in two weeks she was no more able to appear upon the stage. Then, I ask to know, what happened? *Parbleu,* I shall tell you, me!

"She hired a *masseuse,* a strong and healthy young woman of robust physique. In two weeks that one died—apparently from starvation—and Larue, *mordieu,* she bloomed again, if not quite like the rose, at least like the lily

"I was assigned as assistant to the *juge d'instruction* in the case. We did investigate most thoroughly. Oh, yes. And what did we discover, I damn ask? This, only this, *morbleu:* The girl had been a strong and healthy young person. Now she was dead, apparently of inanition. Larue had seemed upon the point of dissolution from some strange and nameless wasting disease. Now she was young and strong and very beautiful again. *C'est tout.* One does not base a criminal prosecution of such evidence. *Enfin,* the poor young *masseuse* was recently interred in Saint Supplice, and Larue—at the suggestion of the police—went to Buenos Aires. What she did there is anybody's guess.

"Now, let us see what we have. It may not amount to proof, but at least it is evidence: Larose, Larue, Leroy; the names are rather similar, although admittedly not identical. One Madelon Larose who is apparently about to die of some strange wasting malady —perhaps old age—makes contact with a vigorous young woman and regains health and apparent youth while the younger person perishes, sucked dry as an orange. That is in 1867. A generation later a woman called Madelon Larue who fits the description of Larose perfectly is stricken ill with precisely the same sort of sickness, and regains her health as Larose had done, leaving behind her the starved, worn-out remnant of a young, strong, vigorous woman with whom she had been associated. That is in 1910. Now in our time a woman named Madelon Leroy—"

"But this is utterly fantastic!" I objected. "You're assuming the whole thing. How can you possibly identify Madelon Leroy with those two—"

"Attend me for a little so small moment," he broke in. "You will recall that when Leroy first came under our notice I appeared interested?"

"You certainly did. You hardly took your eyes off her—"

"*Précisément.* Because of why? Because, *parbleu,* the moment I first saw her I said to me, 'Jules de Grandin, where have you seen that one before?' And, 'Jules de Grandin,' I reply to me, 'do not try to fool yourself. You know very well where you first saw her. She is Madelon Larue who thrilled you when she danced *nu comme la*

main at the Théâtre Français when you were in your salad days. Again you saw her, and her charm and beauty had not faded, when you made inquiry of the so strange death of her young, healthy *masseuse*. Do not you remember, Jules de Grandin?'

" 'I do,' I told me.

" 'Very well, then, Jules de Grandin,' I continue cross-examining me, 'what are this so little pretty lady doing here today, apparently no older than she was in 1910—or 1905? You have grown older, all your friends have aged since then, is she alone in all the world a human evergreen, a creature ageless as the moonlight?'

" 'The devil knows the answer, not I, Jules de Grandin,' I tell me.

"And so, what happens next, I ask you? There is a grand soirée, and Mademoiselle Leroy gives audience to her public. We meet, we look into each other's eyes, we recognize each other, *pardieu!* In me she sees the *juge d'instruction* who caused her much embarrassment so many years ago. In her I see—what shall I say? At any rate we recognize each other, nor are we happy in the mutual recognition. No. Of course."

NEXT afternoon when we went to the sanitarium to see Mazie we found her much improved, but still weak and restless. "Please, when may I leave?" she asked. "I've an engagement that I really ought to keep, and I feel so marvelously better—"

"Precisely, *Mademoiselle,*" de Grandin agreed. "You are much better. Presently you shall be all well if you remain here, soak up nourishment *comme une éponge* and—"

"But—"

"But?" he repeated, eyebrows raised in mild interrogation. "What is the 'but', if you please?"

"It's Madelon Leroy, sir. I was helping her—"

"One does not doubt it," he assented grimly. "How?"

"She said my youth and strength renewed her courage to go on—she's really on the verge of a breakdown, you know—and just having me visit her meant so much—"

The stern look on his face halted her. "Why, what's the matter?" she faltered.

"Attend me, *Mademoiselle*. Just what transpired on your visits to this person's suite at the hotel?"

"Why, nothing, really. Madelon—she lets me call her that—isn't it wonderful?—is so fatigued she hardly speaks. Just lies on a *chaise* lounge in the most *fascinating* negligées and has me hold her hand and read to her. Then we have tea and take a little nap with her cuddled in my arms like a baby. Sometimes she smiles in her sleep, and when she does she's like an angel having heavenly dreams."

"And you have joy in this friendship, *hein?*"

"Oh, *yes,* sir. It's the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me."

He smiled at her as he rose. "*Bien.* It will be a happy memory to you in the years to come, I am convinced. Meanwhile, we have others to attend, and if you gain in strength as you have done, in a few days—"

"But Madelon?"

"We shall see her and explain all, *ma petite*. Yes, of course."

"Oh, *will* you? How good of you!" Mazie gave him back an answering smile and nestled down to sleep as sweetly as a child.

"MISS LEROY'S maid called three times today," Jane Schaeffer told us when we stopped at her house on our way from the sanitorium. "It seems her mistress is quite ill, and very anxious to see Mazie—"

"One can imagine," Jules de Grandin agreed dryly.

"So—she seems so fond of the dear child and asked for her so piteously—I finally gave in and told her where you'd sent Mazie—"

"You *what?*" De Grandin seemed to have some difficulty in swallowing, as if he'd taken a morsel of hot food in his mouth.

"Why, what's wrong about that? I thought—"

"There you make the mistake, *Madame*. If you had thought you would have remembered that we strictly forbade all visitors. We shall do what we can, and do it quickly as may be, but if we fail the fault is yours. *Bon jour, Madame!*" He clicked his heels together and bowed formally, his manner

several degrees below freezing. "Come, Friend Trowbridge, we have duties to perform, duties that will not bear postponement."

Once on the pavement he exploded like a bursting rocket. *"Nom d'un chat de nom d'un chien de nom d'un coq!* We can defend ourselves against our ill-intentioned enemies; from chuckle-headed friends there is no refuge, *pardieu!* Come, my old one, speed is most essential."

"Where to?" I asked as I started the engine.

"To the sanitorium, by blue! If we make rushing-haste we may not be too late."

THE blue ridge of the Orange Mountains drowsed in the distance through the heat-haze of the summer afternoon, and the gray highway reeled out behind us like a paid-out ribbon. "Faster, faster!" he urged. "It is that we must hasten, Friend Trowbridge."

Half a mile or so ahead a big black car, so elegant it might have belonged to a mortician, sped toward the sanitorium, and his small blue eyes lighted as he described it. "Hers!" he exclaimed. "If we can pass her all may yet be well. Cannot you squeeze more speed from the *moteur?*"

I bore down on the accelerator and the needle crawled across the dial of the speedometer: Sixty-five, seventy, seventy-five—the distance between us and our quarry melted with each revolution of the wheels.

The chauffeur of the other car must have seen us in his rear-view mirror, or perhaps his passenger espied us. At any rate he put on speed, drew steadily away from us and vanished round the turn of the road in a swirling cloud of dust and exhaust-smoke.

"Parbleu, pardieu, par la barbe d'un porc vert!" swore de Grandin. "It is that she outruns us; she makes a monkey of—"

The scream of futilely-applied brakes and clash of splintering glass cut his complaint short, and as I braked to round the curve we saw the big black sedan sprawled upon its side, wheels spinning crazily, windshield and windows spider-webbed with cracks, and lenses smashed from its lights. Already a thin trail of smoke was spiraling from its motor. *"Triomphe!"* he cried as he leaped from my car and raced toward the wrecked vehicle. "Into our hands she has been delivered, my friend!"

The chauffeur was wedged in behind his wheel, unconscious but not bleeding, and in the tonneau two female forms huddled, a large woman in somber black whom I recognized as Miss Leroy's maid, and, swathed in veilings till she looked like a gray ghost, the diminutive form of Madelon Leroy. "Look to him, Friend Trowbridge," he ordered as he wrenched at the handle of the rear door. "I shall make it my affair to extricate the women." With a mighty heave he drew the fainting maid from the wreck, dragged her to a place of safety and dived back to lift Madelon Leroy out.

I had managed to drag the chauffeur to a cleared space in the roadside woodland, and not a moment too soon, for a broad sheet of flame whipped suddenly from the wrecked sedan, and in a moment its gas tank exploded like a bomb, strewing specks of fire and shattered glass and metal everywhere. "By George, that was a near thing!" I panted as I emerged from the shelter I had taken behind a tree. "If we'd been ten seconds later they would all have been cremated."

He nodded, almost absent-mindedly. "If you will watch beside them I shall seek a telephone to call an ambulance, my friend. . . . they are in need of care, these ones, especially Mademoiselle Leroy. You have the weight at Mercy Hospital?"

"What d'ye mean—"

"The influence, the—how do you say him?—drag? If it can be arranged to have them given separate rooms it would be very beneficial to all parties concerned."

WE SAT besides her bed in Mercy Hospital. The chauffeur and maid had been given semi-private rooms, and under his direction Madelon Leroy had been assigned a private suite on the top floor. The sun was going down, a ball of crimson in a sea of swirling rose; and a little breeze played prankishly with the white curtains at the window. If we had not known her identity neither of us could have recognized the woman in the bed as lovely, glamorous Madelon Leroy.

Her face was livid, almost green, and the mortuary outlines of her skull were

visible through her taut skin—the hollow temples, pitted eye-orbits, pinched, strangely shortened nose, projecting jawline, jutting superciliary ridges. Some azure veinlets in the bluish whiteness of her cheeks accentuated her pallor, giving her face a strange, waxen look, the ears were almost transparent, and all trace of fullness had gone from the lips that drew back from the small, white, even teeth as if she fought for breath. "Mazie," she called in a thin, weak whisper, "where are you, dear? Come, it is time for our nap. Take me in your arms, dear; hold me close to your strong, youthful body—"

De Grandin rose and leaned across the bed, looking down at her not as a doctor looks at his patient, nor even as a man may look at a suffering woman, but with the cold impersonality the executioner might show as he looks at the condemned. "Larose, Larue, Leroy—whatever name you choose to call yourself—you are at last at the end of the road. There are no victims to renew your psuedo-youth. By yourself you came into the world—*le bon Dieu* only knows how many years ago—and by yourself you leave it. Yes."

The woman looked at him with dull, lack-luster eyes, and gradual recognition came into her withered face. "You!" she exclaimed in a panic-stricken, small voice. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

"*Tu parles, ma vielle,*" he replied nonchalantly. "You have said so, old woman. I have found thee. I was not there to keep thee from absorbing life from that poor one in 1910, nor could I stand between thee and that pitiful young girl in the days of the Third Napoleon, but this time I am here. Quite yes. Your time runs out; the end approaches."

"Be pitiful," she begged tremulously. "Have mercy, little cruel man. I am an *artiste,* a great actress. My art makes thousands happy. For years I have brought joy to those whose lives were *triste* and dull. Compared to me, what are those others—those farm women, those merchants' daughters, those offspring of the *bourgeoisie?* I am *Clair de Lune*—moonlight on soft-flowing water, the sweet promise of love unfulfilled—"

"*Tiens,* I think the moon is setting, *Mademoiselle,*" he interrupted dryly. "If you would have a priest—"

"*Nigaud, bête, sot!*" she whispered, and her whisper was a muted scream. "O fool and son of imbecile parents, I want no priest to whine his lying promise of repentance and redemption in my ears. Give me my youth and beauty once again, bring me a fair, fresh maiden—"

She broke off as she saw the hard gleam in his eyes, and, so weak that she could scarcely find the breath to force the epithets between her graying lips, she cursed him with a nastiness that would have brought a blush to a Marseilles fishwife.

He took her tirade calmly, neither smiling nor angered, but with an air of detachment such as he might have shown while examining a new sort of germ-life through a microscope. "Thou beast, thou dog, thou swine! Thou species of a stinking camel—thou misbegotten offspring of an alley cat and a night-demon," she whispered stridently.

Physicians grow accustomed to the sight of death. At first it's hard to witness dissolution, but in our grim trade we become case-hardened. Yet even with the years of training and experience behind me I could not forebear a shudder at the change that came over her. The bluish whiteness of her skin turned mottled green, as if already putrefactive micro-organism were at work there, wrinkles etched themselves across her face like cracks in shattering ice, the luster of her pale-gold hair faded to a muddy yellow, and the hands that plucked at the bedclothes were like the withered talons of a dead and desiccated bird. She raised her head from the pillow, and we saw her eyes were red-rimmed and rheumy, empty of all sight as those of an old woman from whom age has stolen every faculty. Abruptly she sat up, bending at the waist like a hinged doll, pressed both shriveled hands against her withered bosom, gave a short, yelping cough like that of a hurt animal. Then she fell back and lay still.

There was no sound in the death chamber. No sound came through the opened windows. The world was still and breathless in the quiet of the sunset.

Nora McGinnis had done more than merely well by us, and dinner had been

such a meal as gourmets love to dream of. Veal simmered in a sweet and sour sauce, tiny dumplings light as cirrus clouds, and for dessert small pancakes wrapped round cheese or apricot and prune jelly. De Grandin drained his coffee cup, grinned like a cherub playing truant from celestial school, and raised his glass of Chartreuse *vert* to savor its sharp, spicy aroma.

"Oh, no, my friend," he told me, "I have not an explanation for it. It is like electricity, one of those things about which we may understand a great deal, yet about which we actually know nothing. As I told you, I recognized her at first sight, yet was not willing to admit the evidence of my own eyes until she recognized me. Then I knew that we faced something evil, something altogether outside usual experience, but not necessarily what you would call supernatural. She was like a vampire, only different, that one. The vampire has a life-in-death, it is dead, yet undead. She were entirely alive, and likely to remain that way as long as she could find fresh victims. In some way—only the good God and the devil know how—she acquired the ability to absorb the vitality, the life-force, from young and vigorous women, taking from them all they had to give, leaving them but empty, sucked-out husks that perished from sheer weakness, while she went on with renewed youth and vigor."

He paused, lit a cigar, and: "You know it is quite generally believed that if a child sleeps with an aged person or an invalid he loses his vitality to his bedfellow. In the book of Kings we read how David, King of Israel, when he was old and very weak, was strengthened in that manner. The process she employed was something like that, only much accentuated.

"In 1867 she took sixty days to slip from seeming-youth to advanced age. In 1910 the process took but two weeks or ten days; this summer she was fair and seeming-young one night, next morning she seemed more than middle-aged. How many times between my *gran-père's* day and ours she did renew her youth and life by draining poor unfortunate young girls of theirs we cannot say. She was in Italy and South America and *le bon Dieu* only knows where else during that time. But one thing seems certain: With each succeeding renewal of her youth she became just a little weaker. Eventually she would have reached the point where old age struck her all at once, and there would not have been time to find a victim from whom she could absorb vitality. However, that is merely idle speculation. Mademoiselle Mazie had been selected as her victim this time, and if we had not been upon the scene—*eh bien,* I think there would have been another grave in the churchyard, and Mademoiselle Leroy would have reopened in her play this fall. Yes, certainly.

"You ask to know some more?" he added as I made no comment.

"One or two things puzzle me," I confessed. "First, I'm wondering if there were any connection between her unnatural ability to refresh herself at others' expense and her refusal to be photographed. Or do you think that was merely for the sake of publicity?"

He studied the question a moment, then: "I do not, my friend. The camera's eye is sharper than ours. Skilled makeup may deceive the human eye, the camera lens sees through it and shows every little so small imperfection. It may well be that she did fear to have her picture taken for that reason. You comprehend?"

I nodded. "One thing more. That afternoon you told Mazie that you were sure the memory of her friendship with the Leroy woman would always be a thing to cherish. You knew the cold and spider-like nature of the woman; how she sucked her victims dry so pitilessly, yet—"

"I knew it, yes," he broke in, "and so do you, now; but she did not. She was attached to this strange, beautiful freak; she adored her with the ardor no one but a young, impressionable girl can have for an older, more sophisticated woman. Had I told her the whole truth not only would she have refused to believe me, she would have had an ideal shattered. It is far, far better that she keep that ideal, that she remain in happy ignorance of the true quality of the person she called friend, and cherish her memory forever. Why take something beautiful away from her, when by merely keeping silence we can give her happy recollections?"

Once more I nodded. "It's hard to believe all this, even though I saw it," I confessed.. "I'm willing to accept your thesis, but it did seem hard to let her die that way, even though—"

"Believe me, my friend," he cut in, "she was no really-truly woman. Did not you hear what she said of herself before she died, that she was *clair de lune*—moonlight—completely ageless and without passion? She was egotism carried to illogical conclusion, a being whose self-love transcended every other thought and purpose. A queer, strange thing she was, without a sense of right or wrong, or justice or injustice, like a faun or fairy or some grotesque creature out of an old book of magic."

He drained the last sip of his liqueur and passed the empty glass to me. "If you will be so kind, my friend."

The Steps in the Field

By LEAH BODINE DRAKE

IN a field that no one weeds
A flight of stone steps upward leads
From the grass and Queen-Anne's-Lace:
It is a still and lonely place.

There is no house there any more;
The steps go mounting to no door.
They lead the way but to the sky
Where the hawks are hovering high.

If trespassers climbed that stair
What would happen to them there?
Would they merely stand, and see
Where the portals used to be?

Maybe when they reached the top
They would find they could not stop,—
Go on climbing, foot and shoe,
Secret stairways in the blue!

They might vanish, boot or dress,
Into sunny emptiness,
Leaving field and Queen-Anne's-Lace
For some very different place.

Though we know it's but a game
Children play there, just the same
Do not venture what if you
Climbed those steps and found it true?

Castaway

BY GEORGE WHITLEY

THE water, that at first had been so warm, enveloped him with a cold embrace that tried to contract his muscles, threatened to squeeze the heart itself to a standstill. The salt mouthfuls that he was now swallowing with almost every stroke choked him and seared his lungs. The smarting eyes were blind, no longer staring at the yellow line of beach that, at the beginning of it all, had seemed so close. He no longer knew or cared where he was going, or wondered if he would ever get there. The tired limbs automatically went through their feeble, no longer rhythmic motions—but it was only some part of himself that must always refuse to acknowledge the ultimate defeat.

Perhaps he was already drowning. Perhaps it was only his memory harking back to some happier time, some period when the world contained more than this hopeless wet misery. For it was not the whole of his past life that flashed before his inward eye as a prelude to extinction. It was only the events just prior to his present predicament.

He was walking the bridge, warm in the afternoon sunlight, dry, the heat tempered by the pleasant Pacific breeze. And he was

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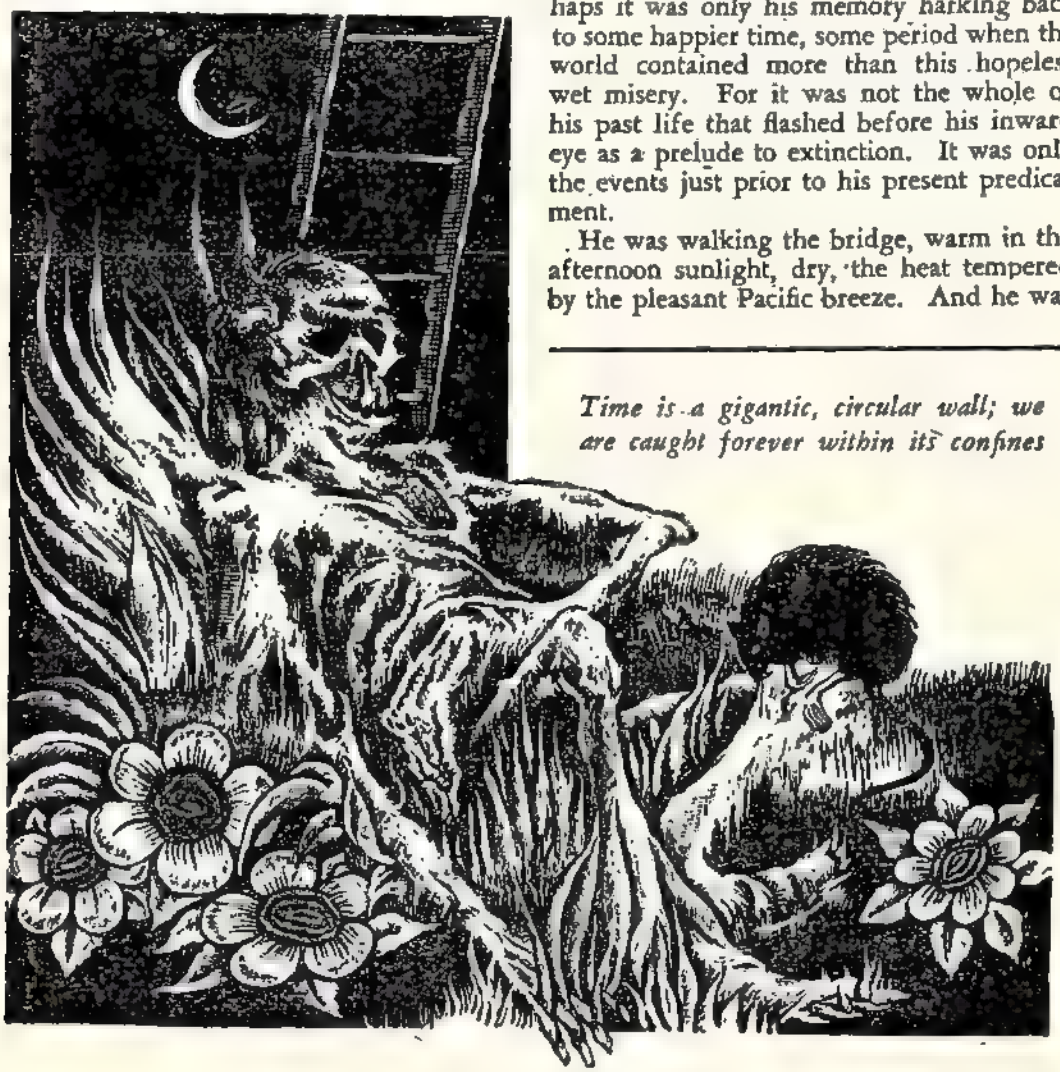
Time is a gigantic, circular wall; we are caught forever within its confines



Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

hearing the carefree voices of the day-workers and the watch on deck as, swinging in their bo's'n's chairs, they joyfully slapped the company's peacetime colors, scarlet and black, over the drab, wartime gray of the funnel. They had every right to be cheerful. The war was over. The ammunition with which the holds were packed would no longer be required—and gone was the danger that a torpedo from a prowling submarine would bring the voyage to a premature close.

Fine on the starboard bow was the island. Lazily, he told himself that he would take a four-point bearing, would obtain a distance off and a fix. He went into the chartroom, leafed through the *Pacific Pilot* until he found the right page. He read ". . . when last visited, by Captain Wallis of H.M.S. *Searcher* in 1903, was uninhabited. There are one or two springs, and the water is good. . . ."

Somebody was shouting. He put the book down hastily, went out to the bridge. The men on the funnel were calling and pointing. He looked in the direction they indicated, could not be sure of what he saw, took the telescope from its box.

The island—white surf, yellow beach, green jungle—swam unsteadily in the circular field of the telescope. But there was a fresh color added—a column of thick, brown smoke that billowed up from the beach, thinned to a dense haze against the blue, cloudless sky.

He had called the captain then. The captain had come up, surly at the breaking of his afternoon rest, but immediately alert when he saw the smoke. Some poor devil of an airman, he had said it might be, or survivors of shipwreck or losing battle.

The course was altered at once to bring the island more nearly ahead. In this there was no danger, the soundings ran fantastically deep almost to the thin line of beach itself. And the watch on deck laid aside their paint brushes, busied themselves clearing away the motor launch.

By this time the news had spread through the ship. The other officers came up, stared at the island and its smoke signal through binoculars and telescopes. Some of them said that they could see a little figure beside the fire, dancing and waving. And the captain, after careful examination of the pilot book and of the largest scale chart of the vicinity, was conning his ship in on such an approach that his boat would have the minimum distance to run to the beach, but so that the ship herself would always be in deep water. As additional precautions the echo-sounding recorder was started up and lookouts posted. . .

And that was the last of his life before this eternity of cold, wet misery, of aching limbs that moved on and on of their own volition when he would willingly have willed them to stop, of blinded, smarting eyes, of throat and lungs burning from the increasingly frequent gulps of salt water.

His bare knees ground on something hard and sharp. The pain of it made him cry out. His hands went down, and he felt sand and coral rocks. He could see now, mistily, and he dragged himself up the beach to where the fire was still burning. And as he collapsed on the sand beside it the fleeting, ironical thought flashed through his bemused brain that now the castaway would have to give aid to one of his would-be rescuers. And that was his last thought until he awoke some hours later.

IT WAS night when he woke up. There was a full moon, so he was able to take stock of his surroundings at once, did not have to go through a period of confused and panic-stricken fumbling in the darkness. Beside him, a black patch on the pale sand, the fire was no more than dead ashes.

There was something missing. At first he could not place it—then suddenly realized that it was the man who had lit the fire. He got shakily to his feet then. Every bone was aching, and the lighter which, wrapped in his tobacco pouch, he always kept in the right-hand pocket of his shorts, had gouged what seemed to be a permanent hole in his hip. He stood there for a while, staring about him. There was nothing to be seen but the pale sand, luminous in the glare of the moon, stretching away on either side of him—that and the sea, smooth, misty blue, and the dark, forbidding trees inland.

He shouted then. At first it was *"Aboy! Where are you?"*—and then it degenerated into a mere, wordless bellowing. But he

could not keep it up for long. His throat was dry and parched, the natural aftermath of his frequent and copious swallowings of salt water was a raging thirst.

Some memory of boyhood books about castaways on desert islands stirred in his brain. He began to look for footprints. On the further side of what had been the fire he found them. And this evidence that the castaway, the man who had built and lit the fire, did exist was rather frightening. What manner of man could he have been to have fled into the jungle? There was only one answer to that question—*Mad*. Possibly some poor, starved creature whose brain had finally snapped when the rescue ship, striking the floating mine (for that, the sole survivor of the rescue ship had decided, was what must have happened) had disintegrated in flame and thunder. Or, worse, it could be some suicidal, murderous Japanese aviator or seaman, it didn't matter which.

But the footprints must lead somewhere. The man from the ship followed them. A direction was the only information they gave him. They had been made in dry sand and could not tell him anything, not even the size of the feet that had made them.

They ended where the sand stretched for perhaps a hundred feet in wet and glistening contrast to the dry grains on either side of it. This, obviously, was one of the springs of which the *Pilot* had spoken. Inland, among the low trees, there was a shallow channel, a sluggish stream. The man went down on his hands and knees and scooped up a double handful of the water. It was only slightly brackish. He soon tired of this unsatisfactory means of quenching his thirst and plunged his face into the wet coolness. Even so, he restrained himself. He knew of the discomfort that would follow upon too hasty indulgence. He rose to a sitting posture and rested. Then, after a while, he drank again.

When he had finished he felt better. Automatically his hand went to his pocket for his pipe. It was not there. He tried to remember where he had left it. He forced his memory back, step by step, until it rewarded his persistence with a picture of the briar being placed on top of the flag locker in the wheelhouse. He swore softly. The pouch in the right-hand pocket of his shorts was more than half full. He took it out, opened it, ran his fingers through the tobacco that, in spite of his long swim, had remained dry. The lighter was dry too. At the first flick of the little wheel the flame sprang into being. He blew it out hastily. He could not afford to waste fuel. Fire might well be his most treasured possession. He remembered, then, the fire that the other castaway had lit. He remembered, with something of a shock, the other castaway.

The vision of the murderous little Japanese had now receded. He knew that whilst he had been drinking at the stream, he had laid himself open to attack, and the attack had not come. His first theory must be right; that of the poor, half-starved, half-crazed creature who had fled into the jungle at the sight and sound of the explosion.

Slowly, limping a little with the pain of his gashed knees, his aching bones and muscles, he made his way back to the ashes of the fire. He sat down beside them, intending to stay awake until daylight in case the other unwilling inhabitant of the island should return. And he fell asleep almost at once.

AT HIS second awakening the sun was well up. It was the heat that prodded him into wakefulness. When he climbed stiffly to his feet he found that his clothing was stiff and prickly, was glittering with the crystals of dry salt.

He hoped wildly that the firemaker would have returned during the night. But the beach was still empty. So was the sea. That was to be expected. The island was miles from the usual peacetime tracks. It was only adherence to an Admiralty route that had brought his vessel within sight of it. Still he stared at the sea, praying that at least one of his shipmates might have survived the mysterious loss of the ship. But there was nothing. Not even a hatch or a grating, raft or lifebuoy.

Food was now a matter of some urgency. He looked inland to where a few cocoanut palms waved feathery fronds across the blue sky, decided that an assault upon them could wait until he had quenched his thirst. By the time he had reached the stream the discomfort of an itching skin was greater than

that of an empty belly. So, having drunk his fill, he stripped off his shorts and shirt and rinsed them thoroughly in the fresh water. He spread them on a convenient tree to dry in the sun. He took off his light canvas shoes and rinsed them too. And he splashed for a while in the shallows and then sat, half in sunlight, half in shadow, to wait for his clothing to dry.

It was still a little damp when he put it on. He hesitated before returning his pouch and the precious lighter to his pocket, then told himself that if it had survived a swim surely it would not be harmed by a temporary dampness. And he was anxious to strike inland in search of something edible and—although this was fast becoming relegated to the back of his mind—the other castaway.

The undergrowth was heavily matted, and the bed of the stream offered the best approach to the interior of the island. As he splashed inland he looked about him for anything that would serve as food. But everything was unfamiliar. Then, after a sweating half hour or so, the loneliness of it all became oppressive. He was looking less for something to eat than signs of companionship. Often he would pause and stand there, listening, but apart from the low ripple of the stream over its rocky bed there was no sound.

Panic came then. He started to run, slipping and stumbling over the waterworn rocks. And he almost missed the ship. He was already past it when a belated message from his optic nerves made him stop suddenly, turn and retrace his steps. And the ship was too big to miss. He stood for long minutes staring at it, wondering how a contraption so huge and so outlandish could have found its way into the middle of the jungle.

It stood besides the stream, in the middle of a little clearing. It had been there for a long time. The metal of which it was built was dulled by age. Creepers from the growth all around it had evidently tried to find purchase on the smooth plating, but, with the exception of those around a ladder extending from a circular door or port to the ground, had failed.

And as the man stared he began to see something familiar about the strange construction. It was like, although on a far vaster scale, the V-2 rockets used by Germany in World War II. Its streamlined body stood upright, balanced upon four huge vanes. There were ports in its sides. And its nose, towering many feet above the trees, was what an airman would call a "greenhouse."

The man shouted.

There might be somebody in the ship.

There *must* be somebody in the ship—the man who had made the fire.

He shouted again: "Ahoy! Is anybody . . ."

And he broke off in mid sentence.

Was it a man who had made the fire?

Was it a *man?*

He had read somewhere that the V-2 was the first spaceship. This—a huge rocket, manned, if the evidence of its ports were to be believed, could be a spaceship.

And it might not be an earthly one . . .

He shivered, remembering the unpleasant extra-Terran monsters invented by H. G. Wells and all his imitators. This, he told himself, would explain everything. He scrabbled in the bed of the stream until he found a stone, elongated and with a natural grip, that would make a club of sorts. And he walked slowly and warily towards the ladder.

It was there, at the foot of the ladder, that he found the first skeleton. He did not see it—so intent was he on the port in the ship's side—until the ribs cracked under his feet. He jumped back hastily, fearing some kind of trap. It was a long while before his heart stopped pumping noisily, before he was able to bring himself to examine the cause of his alarm.

It was a human skeleton. There was nothing alien, nothing otherworldly about it. The skull, brown and discolored, grinned up at him with that singular lack of dignity found only in dry bones. Death is only horrible and frightening when recent.

The castaway stood for a while studying his find. He picked up the skull. He examined it with some hazy idea of determining the cause of death. He wondered to what race its owner had belonged. "It's a white man's skull," he said with conviction, although he did not know why he should be so sure. He put it down with

the rest of the bones and thought—"I'll have to give the poor blighter a decent burial. . . ."

Still gripping his stone club he climbed carefully up the ladder. It was a retractable one, he saw, that when not in use telescoped into a recess in the hull. He stepped cautiously through the big, circular port. It gave access to a small compartment. On the bulkhead opposite to the shell plating was another door. That too was open.

The ship was dead. Nothing had worked in her, nobody had been living in her for a long time. Some seamanlike sense told the man this as he clambered up interminable ladders, through the central well of the ship, to the "greenhouse" in the nose that must surely be the control room. There was light of a sort, for all hatches were open and the sun was striking through the glass of the "greenhouse." There was enough light for the man to feel that his stone club was an absurd encumbrance, so he dropped it. It fell with a dull, flat thud to the plastic-covered deck.

The control room, in spite of the encrustation of windblown dirt on the transparency of its walls, seemed brilliantly lit. The castaway pulled himself up through the last hatch and gazed spellbound upon the glittering complexity of apparatus, the profusion of instruments whose use he could never hope to fathom. He ignored for a while the three skeletons that sat, or had sat, before the decay of ligaments brought collapse before control panels.

AT LAST he brought himself to examine them. They were all human. There was a little granular litter around their bones, the long dry droppings of rats. There were shreds of fabric that might once have been clothing. And there was a watch, a wristlet watch with a metallic strap. The castaway picked it up. It started to tick almost at once—the faint noise abnormally loud. He looked at it curiously. The dial had Arabic numerals, one to twenty-four. There was a sweep second hand. He could see no means of winding or setting it.

He put it down beside its owner. The idea of plundering the dead never occurred to him. And then he prowled around the control room staring at the instruments, wishing that he knew who had built this ship, and when. The technology involved must have been far in advance of anything that he had known or heard of. Yet she had obviously been here for years, at least. He sighed.

He clambered down the ladders into the body of the ship, searching for the storeroom. He found it at last. He could barely see, in the dim light, the little plaque over the door. It said, in bold English characters, FOOD STORES. He had trouble with the door itself. He finally discovered that it did not open in or out, but slid to one side.

There were food containers in there, not of tinned metal but of plastic. The first one that he opened—he pulled a tab and the entire top of the container fell away—contained tomato juice. The second one was asparagus. He restrained himself from running riot among the supplies, opening container after container to sample the contents, and took the two that he had already opened outside where there was more light. There was no maker's label. All that there was was a conventionalized picture of the contents in low bas relief and, in raised characters, the words TOMATO JUICE and ASPARAGUS.

Replete, but sorely puzzled, he clambered back to the control room. He was determined to find some evidence as to the builders of this ship. Ignoring the skeletons, he searched among the rubbish on the deck. He found what seemed to be the remains of a book. He cursed the rats that had left him no more than the stiff covers, a few torn strips of some smooth plastic between them. But he blew the dust from the cover. He read what was written on it in a bold, firm hand. And he refused to believe what he had read.

Log of the Interstellar Ship CENTAURUS, somebody had penned, somewhen. *Voyage* 1

Interstellar ship? he thought.

Interstellar ship?

The word *Interplanetary* would have brought grudging credence. The word *Interstellar* wasn't yet in Man's practical dictionary.

And yet . . .

He looked at the glittering complexity of instruments, the strange devices.

And half believed.

"I must have a look at their engine room," he said aloud.

THE engine room was aft. There was almost no machinery as he understood it. There were things that looked like the breeches of enormous guns, from which ran wiring and very fine tubes or pipes. The guns pointed down. It was obvious rocket drive. Atomic? He could not say.

Still not content, he started to climb again the ladders up through the central well. And he saw a door that he had passed on his way down. This time something made him stop to examine it more closely. Faintly shining in the dim light were the words—MANNSCHEN DRIVE UNIT.

Mannschen Drive?

He shook his head in puzzlement. The name meant nothing to him. But it must have meant something to the English speaking humans who had manned this ship. He started to try to open the door. It was jammed. He decided that the investigation would have to wait until later, until he found some means of forcing an entry. And then the door yielded.

It was dark in the compartment behind the door. He saw vague, hulking masses of machinery, mechanism that seemed to make more sense than what he had seen in the after engine room. There were wheels and levers, and their curves and straight, rigid lines were reassuring.

He wished that he could have more light. His hand went up inside the door, found a stud. Unconsciously he pressed it. He cried out when the lights came on. And after he had come to take the miracle of light itself for granted he still marveled at the efficiency of the storage batteries that had made the miracle possible.

There were bodies in the Mannschen Drive room, sprawled before the machine they had served. They weren't skeletons. The tight shut door had kept out the intruders that had stripped their shipmates elsewhere in the ship. They could have been mummies. The skin, almost black, was stretched taut over the bones of their

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faces. Their teeth startlingly white, showed in unpleasant grins. They were still wearing what appeared to be a uniform of sorts. It was simple, mere shorts and shirts that had once been blue, epaulettes upon which shone gold insignia.

The castaway bent to examine the two bodies, his nostrils wrinkling with the odor of slow decay that still hung around them. Then he saw that there was third body behind the machine. He went to examine it, then recoiled hastily. The unlucky man, whoever he had been, had been literally turned inside out.

He had to go outside until he had fought down his rising nausea. When he returned he studiously ignored the bodies, tried to turn all his attention to the enigmatic machine. It was not long before he succeeded. The intricacy of wheels was the most fascinating thing that he had ever seen. None of its parts was especially small, yet all had the workmanship associated only with the finest products of the watchmaker's art.

THERE was a metal plate on one of the four pillars that formed a framework for the machine. It was covered with lettering. It was headed—INSTRUCTIONS FOR OPERATING THE MANNSCHEN INTERSTELLAR DRIVE UNIT. Most of what followed was, to the castaway, gibberish. There was continual reference to something called temporal precession. Whatever it was, it was important.

He found himself remembering the course that he had taken, not so long ago, in the operation of gyro compasses. He remembered how a gyroscope will precess at right angles to an applied force. But *temporal precession?*

Yet Time, the wise men tell us, is a dimension.

And wasn't there an absurd limerick about it all?

"There was a young fellow called Bright,
Whose speed was much faster than light;
He started one day in a relative way—
And arrived the previous night."

Temporal precession. . . . An interstellar drive.

It was utterly crazy, but it made a mad kind of sense.

The castaway turned from the incomprehensible machine to its control panel. Many of the switches and buttons upon it were marked with symbols utterly outside the scope of his knowledge. But there were two studs whose functions he could understand. One bore the legend START, and the other one, STOP.

He stood before the panel. His right hand raised itself. He told himself that, even though there had been sufficient power in the storage batteries to operate the lighting, there would never be enough to move one minor part of the complex machine. And the memories of occasions in the past when he had been told not to meddle, not to play with things about which he understood nothing, were deliberately pushed into the background of his mind.

It would be so easy to press the button

marked START. It would be just as easy to press that marked STOP if the machine showed signs of getting out of hand.

From the deck the dead men grinned at him.

But he was not looking at them.

His right index finger came up slowly. It stabbed at the starting button. The first joint whitened as he applied pressure. At first nothing happened. Then there was a sharp click. Immediately the lights dimmed, the many wheels of the machine, great and small, started to spin. The castaway turned to look at them, found his gaze caught and held by the largest of the wheels.

It turned slowly at first. It gathered speed. And spinning, it blurred most strangely. It was a solid wheel. But its outlines faded. The glittering intricacy of those parts of the machine behind it showed with ever-increasing clarity. It was impossible to tear the eyes away from the uncanny spectacle. It seemed that it was dragging the man's vision, the man himself, after it, into some unguessable, unplumbable gulf.

He screamed then. But he could not look away, could not break the spell of this devil's machinery. Vivid before his mind's eyes was a picture of the man at whom he had not dared to look too closely—the third body. In desperation his hand groped out behind him, fumbled, found the switchboard. He felt a stud beneath his questing fingers. He pressed. There was the same stickiness as before; the same sharp click.

The machinery slowed, spinning reluctantly to a stop. The vanishing, precessing wheel faded slowly back into view. But the castaway did not see this. Possessed by a terror such as he had never known he had half fallen, half scrambled down the interminable ladders to the airlock; had half fallen, half jumped from there to the ground.

THE afternoon sun was blazing hot as he splashed and floundered down the watercourse to the beach. The sight of the sea, an element of which he had, at least, a partial understanding, did much to calm him. And the sight of a faint smudge of smoke on the horizon, and all that that im-

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plied, almost drove the memory of his weird experience from his mind.

He ran up the beach to where the ashes of the fire had been. But the sand, as far as he could see, was clean. But what did it matter that some freak sea had swept away a handful or so of useless rubbish? Working with calm haste he burrowed into the jungle verge, emerged with armfuls of dry and partially dry sticks and leaves. As he piled up his beacon he glanced at frequent intervals to seaward. He could see the ship herself now, could see that her course would take her not more than three miles from the island.

He finished off his pile of inflammables with green branches and leaves. He knelt in the lee of it, with trembling hands fumbled in his pocket for his tobacco pouch and lighter. He got the lighter out, snapped back the cover. His thumb flicked the wheel, the wick caught at once, its faint pale flame almost invisible in the bright sunlight.

And the lowermost layers of vegetable refuse smoked and smouldered ever so little—but refused to burn.

The castaway extinguished the lighter flame. He tore off his shirt. The garment was old and threadbare, ripped as he pulled it savagely over his head. But it was ideally suited to his present purpose. He clawed out a hollow in the sand at the base of the reluctant bonfire and stuffed the cloth into it, careful to see that it was not packed too tightly.

This time the lighter was slow to function. His thumb was almost raw before he succeeded in producing a feeble, flickering flame. But the shirt caught at the first touch of fire. In what seemed to be an incredibly short time the flames were licking up through the dry wood to the green stuff on top, the pillar of brown smoke was climbing up into the blue sky.

At first the castaway danced and waved beside his signal. Then, as the ship drew nearer, he fell silent and motionless. He stared hard at the approaching rescuers. The first beginnings of panic were making his heart pump violently.

It was the funnel that frightened him. He could see it plainly now—scarlet and black slapped on over drab, wartime gray.

And in the second that remained before he was to find himself struggling in the water he cried:

"Have I got to go through all this again?"

Still Cookin'

"TOO many cooks spoil the broth." That's what's they say, but we at WEIRD TALES are not worried. This witches' brew in the big caldron labeled "March, 1948 issue" has had a lot of stirrings—readers and friends, editors and so on—and its growing more powerful every day.

We've mixed in a little advice from here, an opinion or three from there and the whole thing (this twenty-fifth anniversary number of WEIRD TALES) seems to be going very, very nicely.

Yes, we never knew we had so many interested friends. Right here and now we want to thank all the grand people who've taken the trouble to write in those many letters saying: "You *must* have a Quinn story in the anniversary issue," or "Be sure there's a Derleth and a Manly Wellman piece," and "Don't forget to include Allison Harding and Ed Hamilton . and how about Clark Ashton Smith?"

Well, you'll find these people, and all your other favorites, in the March, 1948 WEIRD. We've crammed in as many WT headliners as possible and we're happy to acknowledge here and now that you readers have played no small part in helping us decide on the "musts" and "shoulds" of the anniversary issue lineup.

So its a case of the old axiom being wrong. The more cooks the merrier, we say!

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We're sorry that lack of space prevents the inclusion of the names of all New Members. The rest will appear next time.

READERS' VOTE

THE CHEATERS	THE LENS
THE INN BY DOOMS-DAY FALLS	PORTRAIT IN MOONLIGHT
THE LAST ADAM AND EVE	CLAIR DE LUNE
	CASTAWAY

THE GHOST WALK

Here's a list of eight stories in this issue. Won't you let us know which three you consider the best? Just place the numbers 1, 2, and 3 respectively against your three favorite tales—then clip it out and send it to us.

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The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) invite you to explore the powers of your mind. Their sensible, simple suggestions have caused intelligent men and women to soar to new heights of accomplishment. *They will show* you how to use your natural forces and talents to do things you now think are beyond your ability. Use the coupon *below* and send for a copy of the fascinating sealed *free* book, "The Mastery of Life," which explains how you may receive this unique wisdom and benefit by its application to your daily affairs.

The ROSICRUCIANS
(AMORC)

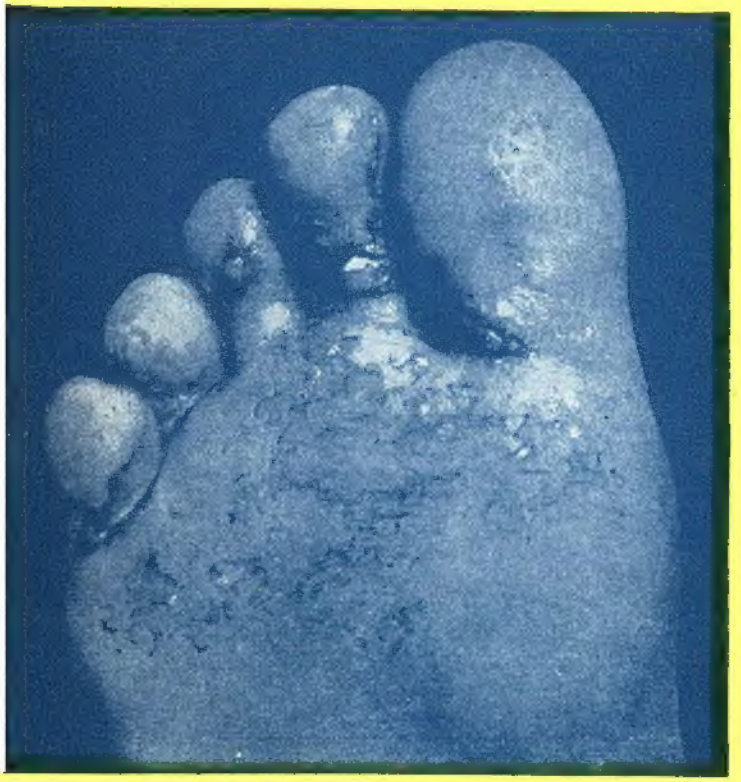
Scribe M.C.Y. The Rosicrucians, AMORC,
Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California.

Kindly send me a free copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life." I am interested in learning how I may receive instructions about the full use of my natural powers.

Name_____

Address_____ State_____

FOOT ITCH
ATHLETE'S FOOT



DISEASE OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD

The cause of the disease is not a germ as so many people think, but a vegetable growth that becomes buried beneath the outer tissues of the skin.

To obtain relief the medicine to be used should first gently dissolve or remove the outer skin and then kill the vegetable growth.

This growth is so hard to kill that a test shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to destroy it; however, laboratory tests also show that H. F. will kill it upon contact in 15 seconds.

DOUBLE ACTION NEEDED

Recently H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's Foot. It both gently dissolves the skin and then kills the vegetable growth upon contact. Both actions are necessary for prompt relief.

H. F. is a liquid that doesn't stain. You just paint the infected parts nightly before going to bed. Often the terrible itching is relieved at once.

H. F. SENT ON FREE TRIAL

Sign and mail the coupon, and a bottle of H. F. will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money; don't pay anything any time unless H. F. is helping you. If it does help you, we know you will be glad to send us $1 for the bottle at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F. Read, sign and mail the coupon today.

PAY NOTHING TILL RELIEVED
Send Coupon

At least 50% of the adult population of the United States are being attacked by the disease known as Athlete's Foot.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is both contagious and infectious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

GORE PRODUCTS, Inc. N. F.

823 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

Please send me immediately a bottle of H. F. for foot trouble as described above. I agree to use it according to directions. If at the end of 10 days my feet are getting better, I will send you $1. If I am not entirely satisfied, I will return the unused portion of the bottle to you within 15 days from the time I receive it.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....